

**HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION
FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES
(SENATE BILL 964)**

PRELIMINARY REPORT

**Submitted to
SENATE BILL 964 ADVISORY PANEL**

AND

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
1430 “N” STREET, FIFTH FLOOR
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814**

**Prepared by
WESTED**

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**for review purposes only
not for citation**

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I. BACKGROUND

The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) takes effect as a legislatively-mandated requirement for graduation in the 2005-06 school year. To date, 25 states are looking to high-stakes exit examinations as a means to help increase student readiness for postsecondary education and entry-level employment as well as to enhance the public's confidence in the integrity of the high school diploma. California joined this growing list of states in 1999.

The states have faced several challenges implementing high school exit exams. Debates over content, timelines, or passing rates have led several states, including California, to modify the targeted content, performance standards, or the timeline for withholding diplomas based on student failure to master this content. Courts of law and professional associations have been explicit about due-notice requirements for high-stakes assessments, detailing a series of instructional and technical expectations that state testing programs must meet in order for such assessments to be considered reliable, valid, and fair for all students. States have often found these expectations difficult to fully meet and expensive to achieve.

An important development that has further complicated the terrain of graduation testing is the movement toward full inclusion of students. Over the past several decades, the notion of *all students* has grown to include students with disabilities. Landmark federal statutes such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have mandated that students with disabilities be full participants in state assessment and accountability systems. This movement for inclusion has led to a review of all aspects of the instruction and evaluation practices of this diverse and traditionally underserved student population.

Two related developments have attempted to increase the accessibility of assessments for all students, especially students with disabilities. First, *Universal Design* principles are shaping test content, ensuring that extraneous barriers do not prevent students from understanding the intent of the test questions and demonstrating their level of mastery of the content (Thompson, Thurlow, and Malouf 2004). Second, a range of accommodations tailored to specific disabilities has been provided (e.g., extra time for administering assessments, Braille forms) to ensure the validity of the assessment results; that is, those students who pass have mastered sufficient content, and those who fail have not.

Despite these developments and a statewide commitment to improve access to high-level content and instructional practices, students with disabilities continue to lag behind the general student population on assessments such as CAHSEE. Senate Bill 964 (Chapter 803 of 2003) required the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a request for a

proposal (RFP) for an independent consultant to assess options and provide recommendations for alternatives to CAHSEE for students with disabilities.¹ It further stipulated that the State Board of Education approve the RFP by January 31, 2004, and the independent consultant be selected by April 30, 2004. A WestEd team, consisting of internal agency staff, staff from the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), and a project consultant with detailed knowledge of instructional and assessment issues related to students with disabilities in California, was selected to carry out the study.

SB 964 requires that the independent consultant prepare a report that does the following:

- (1) Recommends options for graduation requirements and assessments for pupils who are individuals with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, or who are disabled, as defined in Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794).
- (2) Identifies those provisions of state and federal law and regulations that are relevant to graduation requirements and assessments for pupils who are individuals with exceptional needs.
- (3) Recommends the steps that would be taken to bring California into full compliance with the state and federal law and regulations that are identified pursuant to paragraph (2).

The law also called for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish by April 30, 2004 an advisory panel composed of members with prescribed qualifications to advise the independent consultant. The law required the independent consultant to provide the advisory panel with a preliminary report and to prepare and disseminate a final report by May 1, 2005. The *High School Exit Examination for Pupils with Disabilities Advisory Panel* is a vital partner in achieving the legislatively mandated goals of SB 964. The expertise and judgment of the panel members were invaluable to the WestEd study. Appendix A lists the names and affiliations of the members of the Advisory Panel.

Over the course of five meetings, the panel helped the WestEd study team identify and develop a full range of options and evaluate their benefits and challenges. The panel also discussed strategies that California might use to improve the accessibility of CAHSEE and its content for students with disabilities.

This report is organized in several sections. We begin by describing the full set of research and public input methodology used to identify and evaluate possible assessment and other relevant graduation options and recommendations. Next, we provide contextual information to frame the recommendations in their proper and full context. We then present the recommendations and the research basis for each, along with our justification for supporting some options and rejecting others. Following, we summarize next steps that California should take to successfully implement the recommendations of this report. We conclude with the identification of state and federal law and regulations that are relevant to graduation requirements and assessments for California students with

¹ The number of students with disabilities who were administered CAHSEE is substantial—about 40,000 students with disabilities were administered CAHSEE in Spring 2004, representing 7.2 percent of all students tested.

disabilities and an analysis of the steps necessary in order to ensure compliance with the state and federal law and regulations, as indicated in the Court’s ruling in *Chapman, et. al.* (U.S.D.C. CV-01-01-01780).²

² Per agreement with CDE, a draft of this section will be completed by March 20, 2005.

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II. PROJECT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The recommendations in this report are informed by multiple tracks of technical, legal, financial, and policy research. The WestEd SB 964 study team is composed of psychometricians, specialists in instructional and assessment issues for students with disabilities, policy experts, school finance specialists, and evaluators with extensive experience identifying, collecting, and synthesizing complex, disparate, and often incomplete data sets and information. Joining WestEd staff was a team from the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), a group with unparalleled experience with respect to the assessment of students with disabilities. This expanded WestEd SB 964 team conducted extensive reviews of technical reports and other documents, reviews of survey findings, and interviews with experts, practitioners, and policymakers across the nation.

A major focus of inquiry has been the practices of states and assessment programs across the nation. Clearly, other states have different histories regarding policies for students with disabilities, and no state can match the scale of California, whose school-age population is almost 60 percent larger than that of Texas, the next largest state. Nevertheless, other states' experiences provide instructive examples of the technical, practical, and legal challenges of ensuring that students with disabilities are assessed reliably, validly, and without bias on high-stakes assessments, such as CAHSEE. Of particular relevance is the steps other states have taken in their attempts to increase the readiness of students with disabilities to master rigorous content, as well as performance standards and alternatives they have considered or begun to implement to improve access for all students.

The study team brought various kinds of information about other assessment programs to the SB 964 Advisory Panel. In some cases, we presented state-by-state summaries of practices (e.g., multiple diploma options) to the panel. For some states, we compiled comprehensive information about alternative assessments, graduation requirements, and diploma options. These finer analyses detailed the states' current policies, litigation challenges, and contextual factors associated with different options. The panel reviewed the options and strategies being used in other places and generated options of its own. Specifically, the study team addressed each major topic area mandated by SB 964 with the panel over two consecutive meetings. At the first meeting, the team introduced the topic and presented practices in key states or testing programs and options, while the panel generated questions and provided preliminary thoughts about technical and practical features of the material presented. At the second meeting, the WestEd study team returned with answers to the panel members' inquiries, and the panel members engaged in final evaluative discussions of the options related to the topic area. In order to examine the legal defensibility of the options generated, the study team identified provisions of state and federal law relating to graduation requirements and assessment of

students with disabilities. The WestEd study team also identified places where the policy options generated by the panel would require some changes in the law. The team then produced policy recommendations based on the research gathered, the deliberations of the advisory panel, and a consideration of legal requirements. The research strategies used in the study are described below.

Practices in Other States and Assessment Programs

The researchers collected background documents addressing current and proposed practices in all 50 states, then obtained clarifying information via phone conversations and interviews with staff at several state departments of education. Given the developing nature of state policies in this area, the study team also contacted other researchers who are concurrently studying state policies with respect to graduation requirements or the assessment of students with disabilities. The study team then synthesized the information into summaries of the practices in other states and brought these to the SB 964 Advisory Panel for review and discussion.

Document Gathering and Review. The study team collected information related to the SB 964-mandated review areas: high school exit examinations and their alternatives, alternative graduation requirements, and diploma options across the nation.

Several documents were collected, reviewed, and synthesized on the three topic areas. Three documents were especially valuable: *A National Study on Graduation Requirements and Diploma Options for Youth with Disabilities* by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Johnson and Thurlow 2003), and two documents by the Center on Education Policy, *State High School Exit Exams Put to the Test* (CEP 2003), and *State High School Exit Exams: A Maturing Reform* (CEP 2004). Staff reviewed the state department of education Web sites of all states with high school exit examinations, as well as those with promising practices related to innovative and alternative assessment policies and practices, to provide additional data and clarification on current state policies, including eligibility rules, appeals, and processes. Relevant Web pages and documents were printed and placed on file for future reference. Telephone calls were made to state department officials in the student assessment, and special education divisions of several states to gain information and clarification beyond the state department Web sites.

As the recognized leader in research on state policies and practices related to students with disabilities, NCEO was a major source of background information on trends in graduation and diploma options for students with disabilities. Additionally, the study benefited greatly from the research of other organizations, such as the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (Johnson et al. 2005a, 2005b) and the Center on Education Policy (CEP 2003, 2004), which provided timely and comprehensive information on graduation requirements and diploma options.

The knowledge and expertise of the NCEO staff, along with that of the WestEd in-house staff and consultants, were instrumental in ensuring that policies and practices were

reviewed not just in relation to the overall population of students with disabilities, but also as they affected specific subgroups of this population.

Interviews. The study team conducted in-person and telephone interviews with policymakers, attorneys, educators, and legislative staff. These interviews enhanced the information obtained from document reviews in four critical ways. First, the interviews gave us additional detail about the issues and reactions to policies governing other assessment programs across the nation. Second, the interviews provided valuable perspectives on policy proposals for California, including aspects to consider and likely reactions from different stakeholder groups. Third, interviewees identified practical and legal challenges of implementing alternatives for assessing students with disabilities. Finally, in several cases, the interviewees suggested additional sources, both human and documentary, of the most up-to-date, comprehensive information and informed opinion. The list of interview questions used in some of the interviews appears in Appendix B. As indicated above, the study team conducted interviews to ensure that we captured broad perspectives from both the general and special education communities.

Surveys. In addition to the interviews discussed above, the WestEd study team developed a survey designed to elicit feedback on issues related to alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options for key special education, administrator, and teacher organizations to complete. In the fall of 2004, the WestEd study team met with various state organizations (e.g., The Association of California School Administrators, the California Teachers Association, and the Special Education Local Plan Area) to provide a brief overview of the SB 964 project and to request participation in our survey effort. In total, the WestEd team received approximately 50 completed surveys.

Because the surveys were not systematically distributed across the state (e.g., using stratified random sampling), their results cannot be considered as strong, conclusive evidence either in support of or against various options. Instead, the study team used the results to identify advantages and disadvantages of potential recommendations. Details of the survey development are explained in Section V, *Research Detail*. The survey results are attached as Appendix C.

Concurrent Research. The state of knowledge on the topics addressed by this study is still developing. Many states are in the process of creating assessment and accountability systems to meet new federal requirements under NCLB and IDEA. Over the past two years, states have intensified their interest in valid, reliable assessments of students with disabilities. NCLB, with its required inclusion of the graduation rate of various student groups (including students with disabilities) in statewide accountability systems, has generated an unprecedented volume of statewide graduation policy studies. To support timely information amidst this ongoing implementation of new and revised policies across the nation, the study was able to identify research that did not exist at the beginning of the study. One valuable source has not yet been published: a forthcoming NCEO report (Krentz forthcoming), reviewed in draft form by the WestEd study team, enhanced the study's synthesis of graduation requirements in the 50 states.

Advisory Panel

The study team’s work with the Advisory Panel contributed greatly to all aspects of the research collection and synthesis tasks performed for this study. The panel met five times between August 2004 and March 2005. The work of the panel included:

- identifying areas for research;
- generating policy options;
- discussing pros and cons of the options;
- identifying additional aspects of an option that would make it more palatable to students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers;
- recommending options; and
- evaluating the preliminary draft of this report.

The complete minutes of the panel’s five meetings are attached in Appendices D through H. A summary of the meeting highlights appears below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of SB 964 Advisory Panel Meetings

Date	Topics Discussed
August 9, 2004	SB 964 background Introductions of panel members Conceptual framework for the study National and state trends related to high school exit examinations
October 12, 2004	CAHSEE background, including panelists’ questions Benefits and challenges of alternative assessment format options Benefits and challenges of alternative assessment requirement options National and state trends related to alternative assessments
January 7, 2005	Case study of states that are attempting to explore alternative high-stakes assessments for students with disabilities Accessing high standards for students with disabilities Implications of alternative assessment options for different stakeholder groups Benefits and challenges of graduation requirement options Benefits and challenges of diploma options

February 1, 2005	<p>General recommendations in preliminary report</p> <p>Alternative assessment format options in preliminary report</p> <p>Implications of graduation requirement options for different stakeholder groups</p> <p>Implications of diploma options for different stakeholder groups</p>
March 24, 2005	<p>Graduation requirement options in preliminary report</p> <p>Diploma options in preliminary report</p> <p>Review of alternative assessment format options</p> <p>Implications and next steps</p>

Review of Legislation and Case Law

The study looked at both state and federal law, including a review of several key cases across multiple states. At the state level, the study reviewed the California Education Code and California Code of Regulations. At the federal level, the study examined provisions of NCLB and associated regulations, as well as IDEA and associated regulations. In addition, the WestEd team reviewed the case in California of *Chapman, et al. v. CA Dept of Education, et al.*, as well as cases in Alaska, Massachusetts, and Oregon. Besides examination of the cases themselves, the study team discussed legal challenges and opportunities during conversations with different stakeholders. The primary methods to access and review the legislation involved Internet research, review of existing summaries of legislation, and interviews with attorneys, policymakers, and legislative staff.

Internet Research. The study team used the Internet to access California and federal law that focused on graduation requirements, diploma options, and assessment of students with disabilities. Searchable databases of law are available at both the federal level (the THOMAS system from the Library of Congress) and state level (the Legislative Information system maintained by the Legislative Counsel of California, the California Code of Regulations site maintained by the Office of Administrative Law). By searching such terms as *diploma*, *graduation*, and *exit examination*, the study team was able to identify legal provisions that apply. Other Internet sites, such as wrightslaw.com, provided additional background.

Existing Summaries of Legislation and Case Law. Several agencies and research centers have produced summaries of legislation relevant to the topics covered by the study. For example, CDE provided a summary of the *Chapman* case that is included as part of Appendix I (CDE 2004). The study team used several other existing summaries to prepare Appendices I and J (e.g., EPRRI 2002; NEA/NASDSE 2004).

Members of the study team also visited the Web sites of several advocacy groups for students with disabilities, including the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), and Protection & Advocacy, Incorporated (PAI). These sites contain information about the law and students' rights.

Interviews. As mentioned above, the study team spoke with a number of stakeholders about legal challenges and opportunities. In some cases, these interviews identified places in the law for additional consideration, supporting the summary in Appendix I.

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III. CONTEXT FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Several factors influence the ability of students in general, as well as those with disabilities, to demonstrate their mastery of content standards on a high-stakes graduation test. A number of reports have attempted to identify such factors in order to more fully understand their effects on the readiness of students with disabilities for high-stakes testing, such as CAHSEE (e.g., Wise et. al. 2004; Johnson et. al. 2005b). The recommendations we present in this report are grounded in this important research, as compiled and synthesized by the WestEd SB 964 study team. Additionally, the recommendations are the result of extensive and multiple discussions with the *High School Exit Examination for Pupils with Disabilities Advisory Panel* about this research and the state of current practice.

There are explicit parameters for our recommendations, as per the SB 964 mandate. First, the recommendations in this report focus only on students with disabilities. That is, our charge precludes making recommendations for assessment policies directly pertaining to other student populations. There are serious implications to this limitation. Because we are looking at content standards that are meant to apply to all students, in the context of a single public education system that serves all students, it is difficult to cordon off this analysis around just students with disabilities. As such, many of our recommendations are, in fact, applicable to other student populations, such as at-risk groups. Implementing some policies and practices only for students with disabilities may have serious legal and social consequences, potentially treading onto civil rights and constitutional protections, or violating federal and state statutes (e.g., IDEA, NCLB).

The Request for Proposal, based on SB 964, detailing the scope of work for this study included the following tasks.

SB 964 STUDY TASKS

Identify those provisions of state and federal law and regulations relevant to graduation requirements and assessments for California students with disabilities.

To the extent applicable, and in keeping with the Court's ruling in *Chapman, et al. v CDE, et al.*, (U.S.D.C. CV-01-01780), recommend the steps necessary to bring California into full compliance with the provisions of state and federal law and regulations that are relevant to graduation requirements and assessments for California students with disabilities.

Identify options for assessments and graduation requirements and assessments for California students with disabilities.

Identify options for assessments that are aligned with the academic content standards on CAHSEE and equivalent to CAHSEE for California students with disabilities.

Identify equivalent alternatives to CAHSEE that would allow students to demonstrate their competency in the E/LA and mathematics academic content standards assessed on CAHSEE and receive a high school diploma.

Provide a summary of reports, research, and analysis to identify the options above.

Provide a summary of alternative graduation requirements from other states that have a high-stakes examination as a condition of graduation.

Provide evidence of how any recommended assessments or other alternatives for the CAHSEE will meet the requirements for a high-stakes graduation exam.

Recommend options for graduation requirements and assessments, if any, for students with disabilities.

Recommend alternatives to CAHSEE for how students with disabilities may demonstrate their competency in reading, writing, and mathematics, and receive a high school diploma.

Recommend an alternative diploma if the recommended options regarding graduation requirements or assessments or alternatives to CAHSEE are NOT equivalent to the graduation requirements and assessments for non-disabled students.

This report organizes these tasks into three broad topic areas:

- Alternative Assessments Formats;
- Graduation Requirements; and
- Diploma Options.

The specificity of SB 964 and the resultant RFP study tasks precludes this study from examining possible changes to CAHSEE content, accommodations for special populations, changes to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, or changes in instructional practices. While the study team is fully cognizant of the complex interrelationships among instructional and assessment practices, we limit our set of recommendations to the three broad topic areas listed above. Legislators and other policymakers must remain mindful that implementing any of our recommendations requires careful attention to the full range of student testing readiness factors, most of which fall beyond the scope of the WestEd study team charge, and consequently the content of this report.

A final consideration for our recommendations pertains to the state of readiness in the overall system to ensure that students with disabilities have received all necessary preparation to make CAHSEE a fair, reliable, and valid assessment of their full achievement capacity. The Advisory Panel, several public speakers at the panel's meetings, and numerous groups and individuals we have interacted with during our project research phase share a strong belief that the passing rate for students with disabilities on CAHSEE remains unacceptably low, both in absolute terms and in comparison to the general student population (see Table 2 below). For Spring 2004—the most recent data available and comprised of the *first group of students subject to the current CAHSEE graduation requirement*—the first time passing rate was 30 percent for students with disabilities on both the mathematics and E/LA sections, compared to 39 percent to 87 percent for other student subgroups. The passing rates for the entire state student population were 74 percent for mathematics and 75 percent for E/LA, representing an achievement gap for students with disabilities of 44 percentage points in mathematics and 45 points in E/LA. *Since both sections of CAHSEE must be passed to meet the standard for graduation, the percentage of students with disabilities at risk of not graduating because of CAHSEE exceeds 70 percent.*

Table 2: CAHSEE Spring 2004 Statewide Results

% Passing	All Students	Special Education Students	English Learner (EL) Students	Redesignated Fluent-English Proficient (RFEP) Students	Socio-economically Disadvantaged	Not Socio-economically Disadvantaged
Mathematics	74%	30%	49%	83%	61%	85%
English/Language Arts	75%	30%	39%	87%	60%	87%

Source: CDE Web site

While the percentages clearly illustrate the problem, they mask the full magnitude of the concern. Since 38,494 students with disabilities were tested on CAHSEE,³ this translates into more than *25,000 students with disabilities potentially at risk to not graduate*.

Students in California receive multiple opportunities (up to six in total) to retake CAHSEE sections they have yet to pass. Experience in other states varies greatly as to the percentage of students in a given subgroup who will pass upon retesting, from a low of about 10 percent per administration to as high as 50 percent. Reported state retest passing rates are somewhat inflated since they typically do not include students who are absent for retesting or drop out of school prior to retesting.

Further analysis indicates that this performance gap cuts across all segments of schools in California. Tables 3 and 4 indicate the difference in CAHSEE performance between students with disabilities and their general education counterparts by Academic Performance Index (API) statewide decile ranking.⁴ There are substantial differences across all levels of school performance and across both subjects. Nor is this difference limited to CAHSEE. Similar results are found for the California Standards Tests (CSTs) and the California Achievement Test (CAT/6). Differences in the percentage scoring proficient and above on the CST, for all subject areas⁵ for the years 2002–2004, between students with disabilities and non-special education students consistently fell between 20 and 40 percentage points; similar findings are seen for CAT/6 scores relative to students scoring at or above the 50th percentile. (See Tables 9 and 10 in Section V, *Research Detail*.) These findings are not unique to California. Similar results are seen across the nation, where the average difference between students with disabilities and those without on high school exit examinations was 34 percentage points for mathematics and 37 points for reading (see Table 8 in Section V, *Research Detail*). These findings suggest how difficult closing the achievement gap will be and why immediate solutions are not available for direct transfer to California from other states and testing programs.

There is little evidence at this time that this low passing rate reflects the achievement potential of most students with disabilities. Other competing explanations for this low passing rate are (1) incomplete inclusion of students with disabilities in the full range of instructional services required to support their ability to meet the state's achievement expectations; and (2) difficulty of students with disabilities to demonstrate achievement levels on CAHSEE, even with the full range of available accommodations and modifications.

³ Combined 2004 English/Language Arts administration.

⁴ The API is California's school accountability measure. As part of California's accountability reporting, each public school meeting certain criteria is ranked in one of ten equal-sized categories (deciles) according to school performance. For example, a school with a statewide rank of 10 is in the highest 10 percent of schools and a school with a statewide rank of 1 is in the lowest 10 percent of schools.

⁵ The exception is for Algebra I, where less than 10 percent of all students statewide meet or exceed the proficiency standard.

Table 3: CAHSEE Mathematics Passing Rate, 2004, by API Statewide Rank

API Rank	Students Receiving Special Education Services	Students NOT Receiving Special Education Services	Difference
1	11%	55%	-44%
2	17%	68%	-51%
3	21%	74%	-53%
4	22%	77%	-55%
5	24%	81%	-57%
6	32%	84%	-52%
7	36%	87%	-51%
8	40%	91%	-51%
9	52%	94%	-42%
10	65%	97%	-32%
No Rank	20%	64%	-44%
Total	30%	77%	-47%

Table 4: CAHSEE English/Language Arts Passing Rate, 2004, by API Statewide Rank

API Rank	Students Receiving Special Education Services	Students NOT Receiving Special Education Services	Difference
1	12%	57%	-45%
2	16%	67%	-51%
3	19%	74%	-55%
4	24%	78%	-54%
5	26%	82%	-56%
6	30%	84%	-54%
7	35%	87%	-52%
8	40%	91%	-51%
9	50%	94%	-44%
10	65%	96%	-31%
No Rank	22%	68%	-46%
Total	30%	79%	-49%

To summarize, the parameters of our charge and the apparent lack of readiness in the overall system to transform the current low performance of students with disabilities on CAHSEE serve as a backdrop to the recommendations presented later in this report.

Three Options for a High School Exit Examination For Students with Disabilities

The recommendations we offer in the three target areas—alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options—take on different nuances depending on the timeframe for implementing CAHSEE and other graduation requirements for students with disabilities. Broadly speaking, the state may follow three implementation options:

1. Move ahead with current CAHSEE and other graduation requirements (no delay in timeline; implement policies in place now);
2. Implement immediate alternatives to current CAHSEE and other graduation requirements (no delay in timeline; implement alternative policies); or
3. Phase in alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, or diploma options (delay in timeline; build infrastructure to support changes and conduct further research, as necessary, before phasing in alternative policies).

These options are described in greater detail below.

1. *Move ahead with current CAHSEE and other graduation policies.* By the 2005-06 school year, students with disabilities will be subject to CAHSEE and other graduation requirements. Implementation of these requirements must be justified in one of two ways: either students with disabilities have been served sufficiently with respect to other student groups or profound changes will take place between now and 2005-06 in order to ensure that students with disabilities have been equally prepared to meet the CAHSEE requirements as their general education counterparts. The WestEd study team believes that the available evidence supports neither justification.
2. *In order to avoid a delay in implementation, adjust policies immediately to compensate for the lack of sufficient readiness for students with disabilities to demonstrate their full achievement on CAHSEE.* For example, implementing immediate changes on alternative assessment formats can potentially improve access for some students with disabilities. The WestEd study team believes this option has some positive features, but in the long term may not be the most beneficial for technical, logistical, and social reasons described below.
3. *Delay the use of CAHSEE as a graduation **requirement** for students with disabilities for a period of at least two years (and apply it to the class of 2008) or until evidence is obtained that the vast majority of students with disabilities has been given full access to and opportunity to learn and reach proficiency relative to the content standards on which CAHSEE is based; phase in appropriate alternatives.* During this period of time, the CDE, in collaboration with local educational agencies, should carefully examine the full state of readiness of students with disabilities and the systems in place to support them to meet the challenges presented by the CAHSEE graduation requirement. While CDE has

implemented and sponsored research studies related to CAHSEE in general and students with disabilities in particular, additional information will be required to determine whether students with disabilities are fully ready to demonstrate their mastery of the California content standards in a high-stakes CAHSEE environment. The three coordinated sets of research activities proposed are detailed in Section VI, *Next Steps*.

The WestEd study team favors this “delay timeline and phase in alternatives” option for several reasons. The disparity of results on CAHSEE and other state tests suggests that educational services for students with disabilities remain uneven at best across the state and do not represent the full achievement capacity for students with disabilities, except for those with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Test results and Opportunity to Learn (OTL) evidence in California and nationally, strongly supported by the numerous interviews we conducted in state and across the nation, suggest that while education policy is beginning to address the gap in services, equity by 2006 will be unreasonable to expect. For example, in a national survey, teachers report that students with disabilities are much less likely than other students to participate in many important instructional activities (Kennedy Manzo 2004). Equally telling, only 15 percent of teachers believe that most special education students would be able to pass grade-level state tests, compared to 51 percent for their general education counterparts (Olson 2004a). This 35 percentage point “expectations gap” is nearly identical to the average performance differential on state exit examinations between students with disabilities and all other students, as reported above and on Table 8 in Section V. The similarity of assessment results between California and the nation detailed above and in Section V suggests these national findings will also apply to California, particularly in conjunction with the consistent information we have received from interviews, Panel discussions, and public testimony received at Panel meetings.

All the options we have reviewed will take time to examine and implement in the California context—unique size and diversity factors prevent simple transfer of successful practices from other jurisdictions to California. No ready alternative to current CAHSEE policies is currently available for implementation by 2006 without great burden and likely failure.

In 2001, both the Legislature (AB 1609) and the State Board of Education came to the same conclusion: for too many students in California, “the implementation of standards-based instruction does not meet the required standards for a test of this nature.” The WestEd study team has concluded that with respect to students with disabilities, this condition still exists in many classrooms across the state. Research nationally supports this conclusion. Guy, et al. (1999) conclude:

“Prior court cases have suggested that four years are needed as a phase-in period for graduation requirements (e.g., students must know about a graduation exam four years before it will determine whether they graduate). Yet, for students with disabilities, who have experienced exclusion from the general education curriculum and low expectations, four years may not be enough. Instead, it may

be reasonable to hold these students to a set of graduation requirements, only if the requirements have been in place since the students started school.”

The WestEd team strongly believes that students with disabilities can and should still participate in CAHSEE administrations for both system accountability purposes and to track progress toward the success of students achieving these standards. Participation of students with disabilities on CAHSEE, including full reporting on their progress toward mastery, will serve as a *call for action*, requiring all parties at the state, district, and classroom levels to take all necessary steps to ensure full readiness as the price for student accountability.

The WestEd team is fully aware that this option to delay CAHSEE consequences for students with disabilities has major potential downsides. From a legal and social perspective, treating this population differently from other student groups is highly problematic—thus our earlier caveat that such changes should be considered more broadly. We are concerned that uncertainty in the field may cause confusion or inaction—hence our focus on a defined two-year research and implementation process. We recognize that there is no exact standard of readiness—however, the CAHSEE performance gap suggests we are not yet approaching a reasonable standard. We would expect appropriate monitoring at the district, county, and state level to ensure that additional (inappropriate) classification of students into special education programs does not occur during this two-year period to remove other low-performing students from the CAHSEE requirement—changing policies to affect more than just students with disabilities would ameliorate this concern.

Finally, we are concerned with the possibility that any delay will be perceived as a step back from the important goal of maximal inclusion of students with disabilities in the education process or the belief that students with disabilities can achieve at high standards. Clearly, any delay in the CAHSEE consequences needs to be managed carefully and thoroughly. This process should include strong reminders that the performance of students with disabilities remains a significant part of school and district accountability results (e.g., under NCLB regulations, low performance of students with disabilities can cause a school to receive sanctions), and a detailed research and policy initiative to inform when and how to determine if students with disabilities have met the CAHSEE-content requirements. (Section VI begins to lay out several of these steps.)

An argument could be made that delaying CAHSEE consequences for students with disabilities will just maintain the status quo, delaying real reform in the educational services offered to special education students. The WestEd study team respects this argument but cannot support continuing current graduation policies for two important reasons. First, continuing to require students with disabilities to take CAHSEE and counting their results for school, district, and state accountability under NCLB and state provisions will focus the public’s attention on pockets of resistance and inactivity. The success of graduation testing policy is predicated on behavioral changes throughout the system—students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, parents, etc. By far, the greatest consequences of this collective failure of readiness will fall on students, who will

be denied a diploma and the rights and privileges (educational, employment, social) society affords to high school graduates.

The WestEd study team does not underestimate the series of steps required to delay CAHSEE consequences, from the legislature to the State Board of Education to CDE down to the LEA and classroom level (see Section VI, *Next Steps*, for a summary of that process). We are equally aware of the likely consequences of inaction or the burden of quickly attempting to implement complex policies in time for the 2006 graduation class.

The recommendations we present on alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options are based primarily on the assumption that Option 3 (delay timeframe for implementation and phase in alternatives) will be part of the implemented policies. We also discuss these recommendations should Option 2 (avoid delay and implement immediate alternatives) be effected. We do not believe that Option 1 (no change) is viable.

HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES (SENATE BILL 964)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains the WestEd study team’s recommendations in three broad topic areas⁶:

- Alternative Assessments Formats;
- Graduation Requirements; and
- Diploma Options.

For each recommendation, we include annotations describing the general basis for the recommendation, including an analysis of advantages and disadvantages as relevant. The input of the SB 964 Advisory Panel has greatly influenced the specifics of the recommendation as well as the analysis of advantages and disadvantages of each. For the most part, the panel’s consensus opinion is consistent with the WestEd study team’s recommendation. Because of the complexity of the issues involved with CAHSEE, students with disabilities, and legal and technical challenges involved in dealing with these complexities, total agreement on all recommendations was not always achieved between the WestEd study team and the panel and among panel members themselves. Where major differences exist between the WestEd team recommendations and a consensus among panel members, the report so indicates.

⁶ IDEA classifies students with disabilities into 13 different categories—Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Mental Retardation, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment Including Blindness. States, including California, do not routinely collect and report assessment data by disability types. In fact, none of the 25 states currently administering an exit examination reports data in this manner.

The study team has received some input suggesting that we develop different recommendations around alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options linked to type of disability. We have rejected this approach for several reasons. First, no other state currently does so (Quenemoen, personal communication). Next, since states do not routinely report results by disability category, there are no data to support any expectation of differential performance by subgroups as a whole on the various options and recommendations. Most important, there is no evidence that students as a whole within a specific disability category cannot reach the required CAHSEE performance expectations (other than the most significantly cognitively disabled—capped at 1 percent of the overall population at the district and state level by NCLB). The Advisory Panel has consistently supported the notion that students with disabilities need to be served as individuals; this is the foundation of the IEP process. Public testimony and interviews reinforced this basic approach. Exemptions thus need to be made on a case-by-case basis. This option is currently in place in California via the local waiver process described later in this section.

Alternative Assessment Format Recommendations

This section addresses the possibility of supplementing CAHSEE with various alternative assessment formats. For the purposes of this report, an alternative assessment format differs in presentation from the original assessment (i.e., CAHSEE), but is designed to measure the same content standards at equivalent performance levels. The different format can take several forms. The panel discussed more than ten possibilities, but rejected several out of hand because of questionable technical quality (e.g., teacher checklists) or concerns that the approach was inconsistent with federal and state statutes (e.g., “out-of-level” testing, CAHSEE with lower passing scores). This section reviews five approaches seen to have the most promise: Collections of Evidence, Focused Retests, Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT), CAHSEE “Mini-tests,” and Performance Appeals. Among the alternative assessment formats considered, some are already in place in other high-stakes statewide assessment programs, including the *Optional Alternative Assessment* (Alaska), *Focused Retest and Performance Appeal* (Massachusetts), and *Juried Assessment* (Oregon). (For a description of the alternative assessment systems in Alaska, Massachusetts, and Oregon, see Appendix K.) We have also reviewed other approaches, such as the controversial AIMS ED initiative in Arizona and the New Jersey Special Review Assessment model, and rejected them as inappropriate for California at this time due to technical inadequacies and lack of public confidence in the integrity of the process.

Alternative Assessment Format Recommendation 1: While several alternative assessment formats (with and without accommodations) may hold potential promise as viable alternatives/supplements to CAHSEE, none has met sufficient technical or feasibility standards for full-scale implementation in California as an *equivalent alternative to CAHSEE*. Therefore, none should be implemented until evidence is available that its implementation will meet standards of equivalence and have incremental validity⁷ relative to CAHSEE for students with disabilities.

SB 2 (Chapter 1 of 1999, 1st Extra Session), the legislative act that required the development of CAHSEE as a graduation requirement, clearly states that CAHSEE must be based on the state content standards. Therefore, any alternative assessment format that is implemented side-by-side with CAHSEE must also measure this content equivalently. Each of the approaches described below has the *potential* for measuring equivalent standards as CAHSEE.

We detail the various advantages and disadvantages of each approach to explain and support the recommendation regarding its use. The implementation of each alternative format would entail extensive cost⁸ to the state and would require, to varying degrees,

⁷ *Incremental validity* refers to an assessment’s ability to provide useful evidence beyond that obtained from an existing measure; in this case, do the alternative assessment formats tell us more about the achievement level of students with disabilities relative to the CAHSEE-level standards than CAHSEE itself?

⁸ The study team is in the process of finalizing a review of the costs relative to potential benefits for each recommended option. Several factors go into an analysis of this type. For example, one of the reasons tests such as CAHSEE are developed and implemented is because they represent an efficient, cost effective

investments in teacher professional development and perhaps the development of new oversight bodies and approaches to ensure consistent and sufficient implementation across the state.

Collections of Evidence. Several states have implemented collections of evidence (e.g., portfolios) comprised of work samples, classroom-based activities, and state-developed performance tasks, for a range of accountability purposes. States such as Kentucky and Vermont have used portfolios in various content areas with differing degrees of success over the past decade for student- and program-level accountability decisions. Some states are implementing this assessment model to help overcome assessment challenges for special student populations, including students with disabilities, though not typically in conjunction with a high-stakes on-demand assessment. Based on the experience in other states, we estimate that this option will cost at least \$4.0 million annually to implement in California for students with disabilities alone.⁹

means to measure student achievement relative to state content and performance standards. Multiple-choice tests alone can be administered at an annual cost of less than \$10 per student if forms remain static and are reused a number of times. The introduction of multiple administrations using different test forms greatly increases per pupil expense. Incorporating open-response questions and writing prompts significantly increases the costs of state assessments, depending on how many are included and rules for scoring (e.g., one vs. multiple raters, percent of “read-behinds” to maintain scorer consistency). For many state assessment contracts, the scoring of open-response items represents the largest single expenditure.

Among the alternative assessment formats, the most expensive by far is the computer adaptive or administered models since its implementation requires extensive investment in computer software and hardware. The study team does not believe these costs are justified in the short term but may become more reasonable over the long run as schools become more technologically equipped and costs for computers continue to drop. Collections of Evidence also represent a significant cost for implementation (as high as 30 to 50 times the per pupil cost of CAHSEE) but may have the greatest incremental validity payoff, representing a true alternative to the on-demand CAHSEE administration mode. (Similar cost analyses apply to the Performance Appeal option, to the extent it relies on similar types of evidence.) Focused retests and CAHSEE Mini-Tests are relatively inexpensive to develop compared to the other alternatives, especially if they have access to existing CAHSEE items. While their costs are estimated as roughly equivalent to a per pupil CAHSEE administration, their value as CAHSEE alternatives (like all the other options in this section) is uncertain at this time.

The process for determining costs must also take into account the price of inaction. Several studies have attempted to compute the cost to individuals and society whenever a student drops out of school or fails to receive a diploma, using earning potential, unemployment and incarceration rates, and other indicators as dependent variables. These costs must be interpreted in conjunction with the great expense to postsecondary institutions and employers required to retrain students/workers upon admission on high school level content. The recommendations presented in this report attempt to balance the need to maintain and increase the value of the high school diploma with the significant cost of not achieving one.

⁹ Indicated costs for this and all other alternative assessment formats described in this section include expenses to the state for development, implementation, scoring, and monitoring as well as some local administrative expenses. Costs to implement these at the local level will also be substantial, though final costs will depend on how comprehensively schools choose to implement and monitor each of these options.

Collections of Evidence

Advantages

- Allows for multiple measures to determine mastery of CAHSEE-based standards
- Can tailor to students' IEP and other instructional, physical, and emotional circumstances
- Can administer more flexibly than an on-demand assessment (such as CAHSEE)

Disadvantages

- Entails significant training needs for teachers, administrators, and students
- Requires an elaborate system to monitor implementation and ensure fairness across the state
- Involves significant expense for implementation, scoring, and reporting
- Presents significant technical challenges to ensuring comparability of implementation and scoring across the state and in measuring proficiency relative to the CAHSEE performance standard (i.e., cut score)
- Unlikely to increase passing rates without significant improvements in instructional services for students with disabilities

The WestEd study team does not currently support the implementation of collections of evidence as a supplement to CAHSEE because of technical, feasibility, and overall student readiness concerns, but recommends that the state support research to determine its future viability. While we believe this alternative assessment format may have potential incremental validity over CAHSEE alone, there is insufficient evidence to suggest its immediate implementation will significantly increase the number of students with disabilities meeting the equivalent CAHSEE-level achievement requirements.

Focused Retests. Massachusetts is implementing this alternative assessment format for students who have failed multiple administrations of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The Focused Retest is an abridged version of the full test containing only items designed to distinguish maximally between students who are borderline passers and those with an achievement level just below the proficiency standard. Technical studies in Massachusetts and elsewhere suggest that such a test may provide reliable pass/fail information with 30 items or fewer, significantly below the full-form MCAS (or CAHSEE). This approach focuses only on whether a student has met the proficiency standard. No other information (e.g., whether or not the student is achieving an advanced level of performance, data to inform and assist remediation) is generated. Based on experiences in other states, we estimate that this option will cost up to \$1.5 million annually to implement in California for students with disabilities alone if only multiple-choice items are included on the assessment, significantly more to include constructed response items as well (as much as an additional \$250,000, depending on the number of constructed response items).

Focused Retests

Advantages

- Students who fail the full-form administration do not have to take the entire test over again (information for remediation is already available from previous full-form administrations).
- The shorter assessment is better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible.
- This approach decreases the likelihood that students will face content beyond their achievement level.

Disadvantages

- Including items with difficulty levels just below or above the proficiency performance level precludes the customary assessment practice of placing relatively easier items at the beginning of the assessment to build confidence as students move into the test. Without the easier items, some test takers may be discouraged from continuing to take the test; including them will necessarily lengthen the test.
- Excluding “difficult” items may disadvantage some test takers that find these items relatively easier than the ones included on the focused retest due to differential instruction, interests, and abilities. Item difficulty is an “average” value determined across all test takers.
- Using an abbreviated form means that not all standards can be assessed with the same breadth and depth of the full-form test. This may disadvantage some students who have deeper knowledge in particular content strands.
- This approach may be inconsistent with NCLB requirements and spirit and, therefore, may not be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- This option entails significant expense for development, implementation, scoring, and reporting.
- Although technically reliable, the public may not believe such a short test is a credible instrument for high-stakes pass/fail decisions.
- This approach is unlikely to increase passing rates without significant improvements in instructional services for students with disabilities.

The WestEd study team does not currently support the implementation of focused retests as a supplement to CAHSEE because of feasibility and overall student readiness concerns, but recommends that the state support research to determine its future viability. While we believe this alternative assessment format may have potential incremental validity over CAHSEE alone, there is insufficient evidence to suggest its immediate implementation will significantly increase the number of students with disabilities meeting the equivalent CAHSEE-level achievement requirements.

Computer Adaptive Testing. Computer adaptive testing¹⁰ (CAT) requires students to be tested via computer, either online or CD-based. The various CAT models reduce assessment administration times by quickly identifying the ability level of each individual test taker, allowing more reliable assessment with significantly fewer items (Rabinowitz and Brandt 2001). CAT models only present items that fit into each student’s ability/achievement range. Although not all adaptive in nature, about 20 states are in the process of developing some form of computer-administered assessments; all but four include special education representatives in the development process (Thompson and Thurlow 2003). Based on the experience in other states, we estimate that this option will cost between \$5.0–\$10.0 million annually to implement in California for students with disabilities alone. (The wide range includes the potential cost of purchasing large numbers of computers if the state does not wish to significantly increase the testing window in order to maintain current test security conditions.)

Computer Adaptive Testing

Advantages

- Many students with disabilities make extensive use of computers and software as part of their instructional program; CAT methodologies match the assessment format to the primary means of instruction.
- Students who fail the full-form administration do not have to take the entire test over again (information for remediation is already available from previous full-form administrations).
- The shorter assessment is better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible.
- Adaptive methodologies focus items at students’ ability level, lessening the frustration of confronting “too-difficult” content.
- Allowable accommodations can be built into the administration process.

Disadvantages

- This approach requires significant investment in software development or adaptation and hardware statewide.
- There is great potential for equity problems given that some schools have access to large numbers of computers and others have very limited access.
- This option entails increased security concerns due to computerized administration and lengthening of the testing window to accommodate schools with limited numbers of computers.
- Using an abbreviated methodology means that not all standards can be assessed with the same breadth and depth of the full-form test. This may disadvantage

¹⁰ This section focuses on CAT models because they represent a true alternative assessment model to CAHSEE. We do not include an analysis of computer-administered assessments (i.e., a computer-based copy of an exact CAHSEE form) because we consider that to be more of an accommodation to CAHSEE, rather than a different assessment model. Review of CAHSEE accommodations falls outside the purview of this study.

some students who have deeper knowledge in particular content strands.

- This approach may be inconsistent with NCLB requirements and, therefore, may not be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Although technically reliable, the public may not believe such a short test is a credible instrument for high-stakes pass/fail decisions.
- This option entails significant expense for development, implementation, and standard setting.
- Research is still underway to determine whether traditional paper and computer administrations result in comparable scores for all student populations, including students with disabilities.
- This approach is not likely to increase passing rates without significant improvements in instructional services for students with disabilities.

The WestEd study team does not currently support the implementation of computer adaptive assessments as a supplement to CAHSEE because of technical, feasibility, and overall student readiness concerns, but recommends that the state support research to determine its future viability. While we believe this alternative assessment format may have potential incremental validity over CAHSEE alone, there is insufficient evidence to suggest its immediate implementation will significantly increase the number of students with disabilities meeting the equivalent CAHSEE-level achievement requirements.

CAHSEE “Mini-Tests.” This approach allows students to be administered targeted subsections of actual CAHSEE items throughout the school year, either immediately following instruction in a CAHSEE content cluster or on some other pre-determined schedule. Over the course of the year, the equivalent of an intact CAHSEE can be administered. Walz, Albus, Thompson and Thurlow (2000) compare this approach to the accommodation of extended time, where the administration window is potentially the entire school year. Based on experiences in other states, we estimate that this option will cost approximately \$1.5 million annually to implement in California for students with disabilities alone.

CAHSEE “Mini-Tests”

Advantages

- The shorter assessment administration segments are better suited for students with limited attention spans or with physical disabilities that may make longer test periods uncomfortable or unfeasible.
- This approach allows teachers to target appropriate instructional and test preparation approaches to specific test content.
- Student participation may increase because the process for any one “mini-test” administration is not as overwhelming as the full CAHSEE.
- The content of the “mini-tests” is identical to the full CAHSEE across the range of administrations.

Disadvantages

- This approach entails increased security concerns due to lengthening of the testing window and broader access to test items.
- This approach may be inconsistent with NCLB requirements and, therefore, may not be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.
- This option entails significant expense for development, implementation, and standard setting.
- The targeted instruction followed by the immediate administration of a “mini-test” may raise questions of fairness and validity.
- Rules are yet to be developed to determine when students may be tested or retested.
- An extensive management system at the local and state level needs to be developed to track and report student progress.
- Research is needed to determine if the sum of the “mini-tests” is comparable to a full CAHSEE administration; some research suggests that extended time does not significantly improve student performance on assessments.
- This approach is unlikely to increase passing rates without significant improvements in instructional services for students with disabilities.

The WestEd study team does not currently support the implementation of CAHSEE “mini-tests” as a supplement to CAHSEE because of technical, feasibility, and overall student readiness concerns, but recommends that the state support research to determine its future viability. While we believe this alternative assessment format may have potential incremental validity over CAHSEE alone, there is insufficient evidence to suggest its immediate implementation will significantly increase the number of students with disabilities meeting the equivalent CAHSEE-level achievement requirements.

Performance Appeals. Alaska, Massachusetts, and Oregon, among other states, are using an appeals board to: (1) determine eligibility for a student to participate in an alternative assessment approach, and/or (2) judge whether the proficiency standard has been met by the student. A wide range of indicators may be used to determine whether the student has mastered the state content standards, including attendance, GPA, or work samples.¹¹ States that have instituted some form of performance appeals have not had to deal with large numbers of students using this option. For example, Massachusetts has seen very few students with disabilities take advantage of this option. Based on the experience in other states, we estimate that this option will cost between \$3.0–\$4.0 million annually to implement in California for students with disabilities alone, depending on how formal the review process is at the state level.

¹¹ Because the evidence used to determine mastery typically involves data sources similar to those used in the “collection of evidence” approach, we are classifying “performance appeals” in the *Alternative Assessment* section of this report. It could also properly be placed into the *Graduation Requirements* section.

Performance Appeals

Advantages

- Appeals may consider multiple factors besides a single test score.
- Indicators may be linked more directly to the educational program of individual students.

Disadvantages

- Several of the possible appeal indicators are locally implemented and subjective, with the potential for widely different performance standards.
- Significant infrastructure at the local and state level is required to implement and monitor the process.
- This approach entails significant expense for implementation and oversight.
- If the performance appeal is used only to determine eligibility for alternative assessment, then there is still a need to develop and implement the alternative assessment process.
- The subjective nature of an appeal system could be viewed as a side- or back-door option designed solely to allow more students to pass.
- This approach is unlikely to increase passing rates without significant improvements in instructional services for students with disabilities.

The WestEd study team does not currently support the implementation of performance appeals as a supplement to CAHSEE because of technical, feasibility, and overall student readiness concerns, but recommends that the state support research to determine its future viability. While we believe this alternative assessment format may have potential incremental validity over CAHSEE alone, there is insufficient evidence to suggest its immediate implementation will significantly increase the number of students with disabilities meeting the equivalent CAHSEE-level achievement requirements.

Alternative Assessment Format Recommendation 2: The California Department of Education (CDE) should develop and implement a focused research agenda on the technical adequacy (e.g., reliability, validity, equivalence) and feasibility of promising alternative assessment approaches for students with disabilities.

While several states are beginning to implement alternative assessment approaches both for students with disabilities and the general student population, little evidence exists that such approaches have sufficient technical merit to support an *equivalent* high-stakes graduation decision. In addition, the large student population of California (approximately 50 times as large as Alaska, 11 times as large as Oregon, and 7 times as large as Massachusetts) presents enormous implementation challenges. Developing the necessary infrastructure to implement, report, and monitor new systems can be quite expensive and burdensome to local teachers and administrators, as well as CDE staff. While size and burden do not obviate California's obligation to properly serve all students, including those with disabilities, it is important to bear in mind that options that may be effective in smaller settings may not easily transfer to more complex systems

without significant investment of resources. (See Section VI, “*Next Steps*,” for more in-depth discussion of the types of research studies required.)

Graduation Requirements Recommendations

Several approaches could be taken to address the SB 964 charge to examine potentially different graduation requirements for students with disabilities. Both the WestEd study team and the panel believe strongly that any modification of these requirements should reflect equivalent levels of achievement as represented by CAHSEE. Thus, we have focused on the possibility of substituting coursework for passing CAHSEE as a means of demonstrating sufficient academic achievement to support the awarding of a high school diploma.

This approach is particularly challenging to implement, since one of the primary justifications for high school graduation tests in general and CAHSEE in particular was a lack of public confidence that successful course completion meant the student had mastered the expectations of the state content and performance standards. In addition, differences exist across the state in the scope and rigor of courses bearing the same title (e.g., Algebra I). For the state to accept coursework as evidence of CAHSEE-content achievement (even in a limited case for students with disabilities), one of two conditions not in place in 1999 when CAHSEE legislation was enacted would have to be true: (1) statewide standardization in naming and content of high school courses; (2) statewide capacity and infrastructure to monitor and certify the content of local course offerings. The study team does not believe either to be sufficiently true.

Graduation Requirements Recommendation: Use successful student completion of coursework *independently certified as equivalent to CAHSEE-level content as a substitute for passing all or parts of CAHSEE. This recommendation cannot take effect until the development and implementation of all necessary infrastructure to support this option is completed (e.g., professional development, monitoring, tracking/information systems).*

Key to this recommendation are changes in district practices and state monitoring capacity and systems that are consistent with significant reforms in the naming of local course offerings. Review processes will need to be developed to ensure sufficiency of the CAHSEE-related content offered in courses with potentially similar and different titles. For example, policies will need to be developed, reviewed, and strictly enforced detailing explicitly the content that must be included for a course to given a specific title (e.g., Algebra 1, CAHSEE E/LA 1).

The panel discussed more than a half dozen possibilities with varying degrees of support. This section reviews three approaches that received the most interest: Equivalent CAHSEE Courses; Alternate Courses as Core Courses; and IEP Specification of Requirements.

Each of these approaches has various advantages and disadvantages that we present to explain and support the recommendation regarding its use. (For a listing of states that use these practices to some extent, see Section V, *Research Detail*, Tables 5-7.) The implementation of each approach would also entail extensive cost to the state and require (to varying degrees) investments in teacher professional development and the development of new oversight bodies and approaches to ensure consistent and sufficient implementation across the state.

Equivalent CAHSEE Courses. A primary purpose of graduation tests such as CAHSEE is to ensure that students are taught and have mastered academic content deemed essential for success in postsecondary education and employment. The test has no instructional value per se—its success is dependent on the changes it brings about in course offerings and instructional practices. Conceptually, *if* courses are aligned to the CAHSEE content expectations, *if* students are counseled into an appropriate sequence of courses that covers sufficient CAHSEE content, *if* teaching methods and instructional materials are geared to the needs of individual students and subgroups of students with disabilities, and *if* sufficient tracking and monitoring systems can be developed and implemented to ensure quality and equivalence across the state, *then* coursework can serve as an equivalent quality standard. The various “*ifs*” in the set of necessary conditions are intended to demonstrate how complex this option would be to implement. However, if the state were to accept two additional premises, namely...

1. Not all students are able to demonstrate their full achievement level on a standardized test such as CAHSEE; this problem is especially problematic for students with disabilities; and
2. Local teachers and administrators are in a unique position (if properly trained, supported, and monitored) to judge whether such students have met a performance standard.

...then the state should invest in building the necessary infrastructure and support to provide a limited use of coursework to supplement CAHSEE performance as a graduation requirement. The evidence and testimony presented to the panel has been judged sufficient for premise 1 and potentially promising for premise 2.

It is important to underscore the size and cost of the tasks inherent in the many *ifs* this option requires. *We estimate that development costs would be approximately \$3 million followed by annual costs in excess of \$1 million to implement.* Therefore, we believe this option would be best implemented in conjunction with the two-year delay approach advocated throughout this report.

Several steps could make this approach somewhat less onerous. For example, all students should be required to take both CAHSEE sections; coursework evidence would only be necessary for sections and content strands not already passed via the efficient on-demand assessment. Students would only be eligible for this option if they were on schedule to meet all other state and local graduation requirements. Furthermore, with necessary

revisions to the Education Code, the state could exercise stronger control over course content through adoption of appropriate instructional materials that specifically cover all CAHSEE content. Alternatively, the state could provide model course offerings/sequences that would cover all CAHSEE content; LEAs that adopt these models and allow sufficient monitoring of their implementation could be placed on a fast-track approval process.

If adopted, this approach will not be fully successful unless the readiness issues discussed throughout this report are addressed in their entirety. Without full reform of the IEP process and instructional practices for students with disabilities, demonstrating *equivalence* of achievement through coursework will have virtually no value-added effect over the use of CAHSEE alone.

Equivalent CAHSEE Courses

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Multiple methods of demonstrating equivalent achievement are recognized.
- Those closest to the student's work (e.g., teachers, IEP team) can evaluate the student's achievement level.

Disadvantages

- The differences between courses may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma.
- Ensuring standard content and application of courses across the state is difficult.
- Administration and monitoring of the system are difficult.

The WestEd study team supports the development and implementation of the equivalent CAHSEE courses option, subject to the development of sufficient policies and infrastructure (e.g., course naming protocols, external review procedures) to support fair and equivalent practice across the state.

Alternative Courses as Core Courses. This option counts courses that cover content not fully equivalent to the graduation content standards (e.g., remedial English/Language Arts and mathematics, “business math”) as core courses for graduation and as substitutes for CAHSEE-level content. Such courses may be targeted specifically to students with disabilities and cover the same broad content strands as those required of other students, but may represent a more practical application of the content. Guy, Shin, Lee, and Thurlow (1999) provide examples such as substituting consumer mathematics for advanced mathematics, or substituting reading for independent living and work-related literacy rather than reading world literature.

Alternative Courses as Core Courses

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Alternative courses offer greater flexibility and are more appropriate for some students.
- Those closest to the student's work (e.g., teachers, IEP team) can evaluate the student's achievement level.
- General education and special education staff have opportunities for closer ties.

Disadvantages

- This option creates two sets of expectations, one for the general student population and one for some students with disabilities.
- The differences between courses may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma.
- Ensuring standard meaning and application of courses across the state is difficult.
- Administration and monitoring of the system are difficult.
- Alternative courses may reduce standardization for students across the state.
- Determining the best set of courses for each student may be difficult.
- Schools and districts will need to develop new courses and adapt existing ones.
- This option may not satisfy NCLB requirements.

The WestEd study team does not support the option of alternative courses as core courses. Creating different (unequivalent) expectations for students with disabilities from the general population is not supported by the findings of the study team.

IEP Specification of Requirements. This option would allow an IEP team to determine the graduation requirements for each student based on its judgment of the student's capabilities and goals. Although this practice continues in some states, it is contrary to NCLB regulations for the full range of students with disabilities.

IEP Specification of Requirements

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Alternate courses offer greater flexibility and are more appropriate for some students.
- Those closest to the student's work (e.g., teachers, IEP team) can evaluate the student's achievement level.
- Places responsibility for ensuring that instruction is aligned to student's goals and capabilities in the hands of the IEP team

Disadvantages

- Creates two sets of expectations, one for the general student population and one for some students with disabilities
- The differences between requirements may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma.
- May increase special education classification rates
- Places too much power in the hands of IEP teams (e.g., power to change state graduation requirements)
- Ensuring standard meaning and application of diplomas across the state is difficult.
- Administration and monitoring of the system are difficult.
- May be difficult to determine best set of courses for each student
- Will entail development of new courses and adaptation of existing ones
- Will not satisfy NCLB requirements

The WestEd study team does not support the option of IEP specification of requirements. Creating different (unequivalent) expectations for students with disabilities from the general population is not supported by the findings of the study team.

Diploma Options Recommendations

This section addresses the possibility of replacing the current single high school diploma option in California with additional options. As many as 18 states currently have multiple diploma options, including in some cases a specific “IEP Diploma.” Seventeen states, including California, provide students with a “certificate” option for those students who fail to meet all state requirements to receive the diploma (NCEO 2003). Such options include “certificates of completion,” “certificates of attendance,” or certificates designed specifically for students with disabilities.

The panel discussed numerous possibilities with varying degrees of support. This section reviews six approaches that received the most panel interest: Multiple Tiers; Multiple Levels; Career Technical Diploma; Special Education Diploma; Standardization of Waiver Process; and Certificates of Completion. Each of these approaches has various advantages and disadvantages that are presented to explain and support the recommendation regarding its use. The implementation of each would also entail extensive cost to the state and require to varying degrees investments in teacher professional development and the development of new oversight bodies and approaches to ensure consistent and sufficient implementation across the state.

As stated throughout this report, the WestEd team recommendations for diploma options will differ to the extent that the CAHSEE graduation requirement is delayed for two years or longer. We indicate in our recommendations where these distinctions fall.

Diploma Option Recommendation 1: Delay the CAHSEE graduation requirement for students with disabilities for a period of at least two years. Award students with

disabilities a standard high school diploma upon completion of all other non-CAHSEE requirements during this period.

As indicated in the previous section on alternative assessment formats, fewer than 30% of students with disabilities passed both CAHSEE content areas in Spring 2004, compared to 40% to 80% for other student groups reported. Based on the experience in California and across the nation for students retaking portions of a graduation test due to lack of success on a previous administration, a majority of students with disabilities will have yet to pass all sections of CAHSEE required for graduation by Spring 2006.

The WestEd study team is fully aware of the history of state graduation tests and is supportive of such assessments as a means of guaranteeing the integrity of the high school diploma. An increasing number of states over the past three decades have been sensitive to the concerns of post secondary educators, employers, and the general public that large numbers of graduates arrived at the next step beyond high school with insufficient academic skills to be successful. Half the states—25 by 2009 (Center on Education Policy 2004)—have responded to this and other concerns with the development of uniform rigorous content standards and graduation tests to measure their attainment.

As important as the state's responsibility is to uphold and enhance the public's confidence in the meaning of the diploma, it has equal or greater responsibility to ensure that all students receive adequate support to learn the requisite skills required to meet the standards for graduation (as exemplified by CAHSEE). The findings of the WestEd study team have echoed statements made consistently by panel members and members of the public offering testimony at panel meetings: Significant gaps remain in IEP development and in instructional services (both in teaching methods and support materials) to the point where it is questionable that students with disabilities can demonstrate their full potential on CAHSEE. Judges and assessment specialists (e.g., AERA/APA/NCME 1999) have consistently laid out principles by which a high-stakes assessment can be judged to be "ready" for implementation. We are uncertain that these standards can be met at this point relative to students with disabilities in light of the significant value of the diploma and the disadvantage to those who are denied one.

The significant value of the high school diploma requires that the state be extremely careful when it denies one to a student. The situation is even thornier when the student has met all other graduation requirements (e.g., attendance, courses) besides CAHSEE. Never before have so many entry-level jobs required candidates to possess a high school diploma as a condition of eligibility. We have heard testimony that large employers as diverse as Federal Express and the U.S. Postal Service, some California school districts (even for traditionally low-skilled jobs), and the military now require all employees to have a diploma. A recent study released by the Educational Testing Service (ETS 2005) reports that a male without a high school diploma can be expected to lose almost a quarter of his earning power compared to a graduate. This earning gap has increased significantly over the past several decades and is expected to keep growing.

Testimony has also been given as to the need for schools to be able to motivate low-performing or at-risk students to continue to attend school and study hard when the chances of passing CAHSEE seem low, especially following the likelihood of multiple failures.

The WestEd study team is sympathetic to these concerns but must remind policymakers that the continued low performance on CAHSEE for students with disabilities is evidence of the continued need for a graduation test that backs up the meaning of a diploma. It is for this reason that we are unwilling at this time to recommend permanently decoupling passing CAHSEE with attaining a high school diploma. A preferred option would be to continue to administer CAHSEE to students with disabilities, but delay implementation of it as a graduation requirement until instructional practices can be demonstrated to have adequately prepared the large majority of students with disabilities for the rigors of the CAHSEE content.

Diploma Option Recommendation 2: If the CAHSEE graduation requirement is *not* delayed beyond the graduation class of 2005-06, develop and implement a multiple tier diploma for students with disabilities in time for that graduation class.

Diploma Option Recommendation 3: Increase standardization of the waiver process for students with disabilities.

Diploma Option Recommendation 4: Continue to offer certificates of completion under specific circumstances for students with disabilities.

The WestEd study team and the panel looked closely at several multiple diploma options, most of which are in place in one or more states. Each potential option has several attractive features as well as major challenges and barriers. (For a listing of multiple diploma practices across the nation, see Tables 5 and 6 in Section V.) In this section, we describe the six options reviewed extensively by the panel including their advantages and disadvantages and indicate whether we believe they are desirable options for California.

Multiple Tiers. Several states have implemented a tiered diploma system, whereby students are given different levels of diplomas contingent on their performance on an exit examination or based on other performance criteria (e.g., course completion). In California, for example, the “base” diploma (tier 1) could represent that the student has met all course, attendance, and other local and state requirements but has not passed CAHSEE. The “CAHSEE” diploma (tier 2) could be inclusive of the base diploma expectations but denotes that the student has also met the CAHSEE requirement. An “honors” diploma (tier 3) could represent attainment of all of the above, plus some additional achievement in a range of academic, career-technical, athletic, or social domains.

Tiered Diplomas

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Multiple levels of achievement are recognized.
- Such diplomas are perceived to be successful in several states
- May be effective in communicating specifically what the student has achieved

Disadvantages

- The differences between diplomas may dilute the meaning of and the public's confidence in the high school diploma.
- Tiered diplomas may promote tracking of at-risk student groups, including students with disabilities, into lower-level courses and diploma tiers.
- Postsecondary institutions and employers may not universally accept these diplomas.
- The state would face an increased burden to inform the public about the different tiers of diplomas.
- Students with disabilities may face reduced access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be attained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE performance level.
- Administration of the system is difficult.

The WestEd study team supports the immediate development and implementation of the tiered diploma for students with disabilities if the CAHSEE graduation requirement is not delayed. The value of the high school diploma requires all reasonable steps be taken to prepare students adequately before denying the diploma can be legally justified.

Multiple Levels. The multiple level system sidesteps some of the potential criticisms of the tiered diploma option, namely its hierarchical nature and the concern that at its lowest level (e.g., tier 1 “base”) students may not be adequately prepared for postsecondary education or employment. Under the multiple level system, the different types of diplomas are not based on internal school achievement criteria, but instead are linked to real world, next step expectations. For example, “task analyses” can be performed to differentiate the actual academic expectations of a full range of postsecondary experiences including entry-level jobs, community college, CSU, UC, etc. Students would receive their diploma based on the match between their achievement levels and their postsecondary goals. Unlike the previous tiered-diploma model, the various levels can all be viewed as satisfactory since they align with each student’s postsecondary goals and are linked to real-world performance expectations.

Level Diplomas

Advantages

- Real-world expectations and student goals are linked to the diploma.
- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Multiple levels of achievement are recognized.
- The student's achievement may be specifically communicated.

Disadvantages

- Identifying and differentiating “real-world” academic expectations and then determining whether students have met them may be difficult.
- Tracking of at-risk student groups, including students with disabilities, into lower-level courses and diploma levels may increase.
- The migration of students whose goals change during high school into a different diploma track may be difficult to accommodate and monitor.
- The public may value different levels of diplomas differentially.
- The burden on schools to inform the public about the different diploma levels increases.
- Students with disabilities may face reduced access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be attained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE performance level.
- Administration of the system is difficult.
- Ensuring standard meaning and application of diplomas across the state is difficult.

The WestEd study team does not currently support the development and implementation of the level diploma but recommends that the state support research to determine its future feasibility.

Career-Technical Diploma. This diploma option is designed for students whose postsecondary goals call for direct entry into career training programs or the work force rather than the higher education system. The focus could be either at the career-cluster or occupation-specific level, depending on the career area and available course and program offerings. As of 2003, four states offer career-technical (occupational) diplomas (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

Career-Technical Diploma

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- This diploma is consistent with the goals of many students with disabilities.
- Students may be better prepared for future employment and life skills.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Students and employers will benefit from students having an endorsement of

implied expertise.

- This option can be incorporated into a tiered diploma option (described above).

Disadvantages

- Entails extensive study of the requirements for several industries and entry-level jobs to ensure proper preparation of students (academically and job-specific)
- It is uncertain what value the business community would place on a career technical diploma (i.e., will employers see this equivalent to or better than the traditional academic diploma?)
- May not easily accommodate the migration of students whose goals change during high school into a different diploma track
- May narrow the focus of students with disabilities primarily to nonacademic courses
- May entail prohibitive costs for developing sufficient courses and options to support this option

The WestEd study team does not support the development and implementation of a career-technical diploma. Creating different (unequivalent) expectations for students with disabilities from the general population is not supported by the findings of the study team.

Special Education Diploma. Unlike the other options in this section, the Special Education diploma could only be available to students with disabilities. Diplomas would be awarded either to the extent the student meets all IEP expectations or based on a set of specific criteria determined by the state and LEA. Twelve states have instituted special education diplomas for students with disabilities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

Special Education Diploma

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- The diploma can be tied directly to the expectations in each student's IEP.
- Awarding the diploma recognizes multiple levels of achievement.

Disadvantages

- The separate diploma may promote tracking of students with disabilities into lower level courses and diploma tiers.
- The separate diploma may place students with disabilities at a disadvantage with respect to access to postsecondary education and future employment.
- Students with disabilities may have less access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be attained without a requirement to achieve at the CAHSEE level.
- Administration of the system is difficult.
- Ensuring standard meaning and application of diplomas across the state is

difficult.

- The diploma differentiates students with disabilities from the general student population, which may be inconsistent with state and federal statutes and progressive public policy.

The WestEd study team does not support the development and implementation of a special education diploma. Creating different (unequivalent) expectations for students with disabilities from the general population is not supported by the findings of the study team.

Standardization of Waiver Process. Current state statute and regulations allow for local waivers of certain graduation requirements under specific circumstances. Included in the list of waivers is a local option to allow CAHSEE to be administered using modifications¹², rather than accommodations. Students may still receive a standard high school diploma, if the following conditions are met:

- The parent or guardian must request that the school principal seek a waiver from the LEA
- The principal then certifies to the LEA that the student has:
 - an IEP in place that specifies the modifications to be provided to the pupil when taking CAHSEE;
 - satisfactorily completed (or is in the process of completing) sufficient high school level coursework in preparation for passing the high school exit examination;
 - a score report showing attainment of an equivalent of a passing score on the high school exit examination while using a modification (e.g., calculators, readers).

Under this option, the waiver process could be encouraged for use by a wider range of students (consistent with IEP specifications), but more closely monitored by the state to prevent abuses.

¹² Unlike accommodations which do not change the meaning of the resultant test score, test results using modifications (e.g., reading the reading section of a test) are not comparable to those obtained either from a standard or accommodated administration.

Standardization of Waiver Process

Advantages

- The number of students receiving diplomas will likely increase.
- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- Students' testing conditions are tied directly to the expectations in the IEP.
- The diploma continues to imply having passed CAHSEE, albeit with modifications.
- The waiver process is consistent with current state statutes, regulations, and practices.

Disadvantages

- There is no evidence that the “modified” CAHSEE scores are equivalent to “regular” CAHSEE scores with and without accommodations (most likely these scores will represent lower performance than those obtained under a standard CAHSEE administration).
- Fair implementation of this option requires significant training to identify appropriate candidates and modifications.
- Significant oversight is needed to ensure fairness across the state.
- This option differentiates students with disabilities from the general student population, which may be inconsistent with state and federal statutes and progressive public policy.

The WestEd study team supports the increased standardization of the waiver process so long as sufficient monitoring systems are put in place to prevent abuses.

Certificates of Completion. Current state statute and regulations allow for local awarding of a certificate of completion under specific circumstances. The LEA must certify that the student has:

- satisfactorily completed a prescribed alternative course of study;
- met the goals of his/her IEP; or
- participated in high school instruction and has met the objectives of the statement of transition services.

While the certificate is not equivalent to the high school diploma, students can still participate in graduation ceremonies and receive acknowledgement of their K–12 participation and efforts.

Certificates of Completion

Advantages

- Student motivation to remain in school may increase.
- The certificate can be tied directly to the expectations in each student's IEP.
- This option is consistent with current state statutes, regulations, and practices.

Disadvantages

- Certificates of completion may promote tracking of students with disabilities into lower level courses.
- Not having a diploma places many students with disabilities at a disadvantage with respect to access to postsecondary education/training and future employment.
- This option differentiates students with disabilities from the general student population, which may be inconsistent with state and federal statutes and progressive public policy.

The WestEd study team supports the ongoing implementation of this option.

Summary of Recommendations

In summary, the following are the major recommendations of the WestEd SB 964 study team regarding alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options.

Summary of Major Recommendations

Alternative Assessment Formats

Recommendation 1: While several alternative assessment formats (with and without accommodations) may hold potential promise as viable alternatives/supplements to CAHSEE, none has met sufficient technical or feasibility standards for full-scale implementation in California as an *equivalent alternative* to CAHSEE. Therefore none should be implemented until evidence is available that their implementation will meet standards of equivalence and have incremental validity relative to CAHSEE for students with disabilities.

Recommendation 2: The California Department of Education (CDE) should develop and implement a focused research agenda on the technical adequacy (e.g., reliability, validity, equivalence) and feasibility of promising alternative assessment approaches for students with disabilities.

Graduation Requirements

Recommendation: Use successful student completion of course work *independently certified as equivalent* to CAHSEE-level content as a substitute for passing all or part of CAHSEE. This recommendation cannot take effect until the development and implementation of all necessary infrastructure to support this option (e.g., professional development, monitoring, tracking/information systems).

Diploma Options

Recommendation 1: Delay the CAHSEE graduation requirement for students with disabilities for a period of at least two years. Award students with disabilities a standard high school diploma under current statute and regulations during this period.

Recommendation 2: If the CAHSEE graduation requirement is *not* delayed beyond the graduation class of 2005-06, develop and implement a multiple tier diploma for students with disabilities in time for that graduation class.

Recommendation 3: Increase standardization of the waiver process for students with disabilities.

Recommendation 4: Continue to offer certificates of completion under specific circumstances for students with disabilities.

HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES (SENATE BILL 964)

V. RESEARCH DETAIL

The recommendations in the previous section are grounded by extensive research on policy, practice, and test results in other states and assessment programs, discussion of the advisory panel, and review of California and federal policies and legislation. As outlined in Section II, the WestEd SB 964 study team employed a variety of methods to research a topic where the current state of knowledge may change by action of state legislatures, courts, or state and federal agencies. Indeed, over the course of the study, the study team gained new information and policy insights based on the actions of these groups, as well as timely publications.

We begin by providing an overview of states' policies, practices, and assessment results related to high school exit examinations, graduation requirements, and diploma options for students with disabilities, and, as relevant, to their general education counterparts. We then present the research basis for each of the three topic areas—alternative assessment formats, graduation requirements, and diploma options. For each topic, we list the major sources of data, then summarize and highlight relevant research findings, and end with a brief description of advisory panel deliberations on that topic.

Overview of States' Policies, Practices, and Assessment Results

Graduation exams and assessment of students with disabilities are substantial topics in their own right, about which much has been written in recent years. The subject of this study is the overlap of these topics, where considerably less research is available. To carry out the research required by SB 964, examples from other states have been especially helpful. The study team completed an all-inclusive review of policies, practices, and assessment results in other states, using existing research, Internet review of state Web sites, and direct contact with state departments of education.

Interestingly, there is an even split between states that have high school exit exams (N=25) and those that do not (N=25). In an attempt to tease out possible trends, we looked at the graduation options for students with disabilities separately for those states that have an exit exam and those that do not. Table 5 summarizes the graduation options for students in states that have exit examinations. It shows that:

- The vast majority (76%) of states with high school exit exams offer some form of alternative assessment for students with disabilities (N = 19).
- Almost two-thirds of the states with exit exams have different graduation requirements for students with disabilities (N = 16).
- Most (72%) of the states with exit exams offer non-standard diploma options (N = 18).

- Florida and Idaho offer an alternative assessment for all students, not specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Table 6 shows a summary of the graduation options for students in states that do not have exit examinations. It shows that:

- The vast majority (76%) of states without exit exams have different state graduation requirements for students with disabilities (N = 19).
- Half of the states (3 of the 6) that have a single set of state graduation requirements for all students have different local requirements for students with disabilities.
- About two-thirds of the states without exit exams have non-standard diploma options (N = 17).

The data in Tables 5 and 6 show that the vast majority of states have different state graduation requirements for students with disabilities, regardless of whether they have an exit examination. Similarly, the majority of states in both categories also offer non-standard diploma options for students with disabilities.

Table 7 presents a summary of key graduation policies for states with exit exams: Does the exit exam apply to current students or students in future graduation classes? Is awarding of a diploma contingent on passing the exit exam? Are accommodations allowed? Are there waivers and appeals for the exit exam? Are there alternative assessments to the exit exam? The key findings are:

- About three-fourths (19 out of 25) of the states with exit exams withhold a diploma from students who do not pass.
- The 6 exceptions are states that are phasing in the exit exams: Arizona (class of 2006), California (2006), Idaho (2006), Maryland¹³ (2009), Utah (2006), and Washington (2008).
- All 25 states with exit exams allow accommodations on the exam.
- More than half of the states with exit exams allow waivers or appeals of the exam (14 out of 25).
- As previously stated, 19 of the 25 states offer alternative assessments to the high school exam.

Table 8 presents a state-by-state summary of first-time passing rates on high school exit examinations for students with disabilities and all students. Passing rates differ widely across states for both populations due primarily to differences in the content and performance standards on these tests (Achieve 2004). However, some strong patterns, consistent with those found on CAHSEE are evident:

- The average difference between students with disabilities and all students is 34 percentage points in mathematics and 37 percentage points in reading.

¹³ Maryland's class of 2004 took the Maryland Functional Test as a graduation requirement. The Maryland High School Assessments become a graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2009.

- The range of differences varies from a low of 18 percentage points to a high of 53 percentage points.
- Forty-three (43) of the 46 differences in the table exceed 20 percentage points. Of these differences between students with disabilities and all students, none was less than 18 points.

Tables 9 and 10 summarize other (non-CAHSEE) California assessment results. Specifically, we examined the statewide results of the California Standards Test (CST) from 2002 – 2004 and CAT/6 data from 2003 and 2004. CST results are presented as the percentage of students that scored at or above proficient, both for students with disabilities and students with no disability. CAT/6 results indicate the percentages of students at or above the 50th national percentile rank, for the same two student populations. Results are similar for both tests and represent the same pattern of performance as seen in CAHSEE and other assessment programs across the nation. Specifically:

- Differences on CST all fall between 18 and 34 percentage points across all grades and content areas (excluding Algebra I where very few students across both groups meet or exceed the proficiency standard).
- CAT/6 results range from 23 to 43 percentage points across grades and content areas with a mean difference of 35.4 points in 2004 and 35.6 points in 2003.
- The achievement gap between students with disabilities and their general education counterparts has not decreased to any significant degree over the past several years.

Table 5: Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities in States with High School Exit Exams

State	High School Exit Examination (HSEE)	State Alternative Assessment to HSEE for Students with Mild and/or Severe Cognitive Disabilities	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
Alabama	Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE)	No	No	NA	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupational Diploma Local Certificate
Alaska	High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified HSGQE (mild) Non-standardized HSGQE process (portfolio/juried assessment) (mild) Alternative Assessment (severe) 	No	NA	Yes	Certificate of Achievement
Arizona	Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) Class of 2006	AIMS-A (Alternate) (severe)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate courses approved by IEP team Performance criteria lowered 	No	NA
California	California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Class of 2006	No	No	NA	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of Achievement Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
Florida	Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)	No; SAT and ACT cut scores established (all students)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate courses Performance criteria lowered 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma Certificate of Attendance

NA: Not Applicable

Table 5: Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities in States with High School Exit Exams

State	High School Exit Examination (HSEE)	State Alternative Assessment to HSEE for Students with Mild and/or Severe Cognitive Disabilities	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
Georgia	Georgia High School Qualification Test (GHSQT); HS Writing Test	Georgia Alternate Assessment (severe)	Yes	Alternate courses	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma • Certificate of Attendance • Diploma Seal Options
Idaho	Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) Class of 2006	No; SAT and ACT cut scores established (all students)	Yes	Local appeal if IEP outlines other requirements	No	NA
Indiana	Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE)	No	No	NA	Yes	Certificate of Attendance
Louisiana	Graduation Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21)	No	No	NA	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career/Technical Endorsement • Academic Endorsement
Maryland	High School Assessment (HSA) Class of 2009	No	No	NA	No	NA
Massachusetts	10th Grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)	MCAS-Alt - portfolio (severe)	Yes	Individual consideration state process	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement
Minnesota	Basic Skills Test (BST)	No	Yes	Modified curriculum	No	NA
Mississippi	Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)	Alternate Assessment (teachers collect evidence; Review Committee approves or rejects evidence)	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	Yes	Certificate of Attendance
Nevada	High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE)	Skills and Competencies Alternate Assessment of Nevada (SCAAN) (severe)	No	NA	Yes	Adjusted Diploma

NA: Not Applicable

Table 5: Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities in States with High School Exit Exams

State	High School Exit Examination (HSEE)	State Alternative Assessment to HSEE for Students with Mild and/or Severe Cognitive Disabilities	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
New Jersey	High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Review Assessment (SRA) (mild) Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA) (severe) 	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	No	NA
New Mexico	New Mexico High School Competency Examination (NMHSCE)	New Mexico Alternate Assessment (severe)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate courses Modified curriculum 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple pathways to diploma (standard, career readiness, and ability); different HSEE requirements
New York	Regents Comprehensive Exam	IEP/504 Teams can recommend Regents Competency Exams, which lead only to local diplomas	No	NA	Yes	IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma
North Carolina	North Carolina High School Competency Test (NCHSCT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NC Alternate Assessment Academic Inventory (NCAAAI) (mild) NC Alternate Assessment Portfolio (NCAAP) (severe) 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate courses Modified curriculum: Four courses of study, leading to one diploma 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of Achievement Certificate of Attendance
Ohio	Ohio Graduation Test (OGT)	Ohio Alternate Assessment (severe)	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	No	NA
South Carolina	High School Assessment Program (HSAP)	High School Alternate Assessment Program (HSAP-Alt) (severe)	Yes	Alternate course decisions made by local districts	Yes	Certificate of Achievement
Tennessee	Gateway Tests (Mathematics, Science, Language Arts)	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program Alternative Assessments (TCAP-Alt) (severe)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate courses Performance criteria lowered 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma Certificate of Attendance

NA: Not Applicable

Table 5: Graduation Options for Students with Disabilities in States with High School Exit Exams

State	High School Exit Examination (HSEE)	State Alternative Assessment to HSEE for Students with Mild and/or Severe Cognitive Disabilities	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
Texas	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); English III/Writing; Algebra I/Geometry; HS Science; Social Studies	Locally Determined Alternative Assessment (LDAA)	Yes	Alternate courses	No	NA
Utah	Utah Basic Skills Competency Test (UBSCT) Class of 2006	Utah Alternate Assessment (UAA) (severe)	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative Completion Diploma Certificate of Completion
Virginia	Standards of Learning Tests (SOL) — English; Algebra I/II/Geometry; Science; History	Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (severe)	No	NA	Yes	Modified Standard Diploma
Washington	Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) Class of 2008	Washington Alternate Assessment System (WAAS)- (severe)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credits reduced Alternate courses used 	Yes	IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma

NA: Not Applicable

Table 6: Graduation Options for Students in States without High School Exit Exams

State	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
Arkansas	Yes	LEA substitutes special ed. credit for regular ed. if generally the same	Yes	Honors, Standard, Basic Distinctions
Colorado	Local requirements only	As per local requirements	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma • Certificate of Attendance • Occupational Diploma
Connecticut	Local requirements only	As per local requirements	No	NA
Delaware	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic, Standard, Distinguished Diploma • Certificate of Performance
Hawaii	No	NA	Yes	Certificate of Course Completion
Illinois	Yes	Alternate courses used	Yes	Certificate of Attendance
Iowa	Local requirements only	As per local requirements	Yes	Certificate of Attendance
Kansas	Yes	Those specifically determined by an IEP team that are approved as meeting the same standard by local board	No	NA
Kentucky	No	NA	No	NA
Maine	Yes	Those specifically noted in IEP	No	NA
Michigan	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate courses • Others specifically noted in IEP 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement
Missouri	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credits reduced • Alternate courses used • Others as specifically noted in IEP 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Attendance • Occupational Diploma
Montana	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate courses • Performance criteria lowered 	Yes	Local options
Nebraska	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credits reduced • Alternate courses used • Performance criteria lowered 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement • Occupational Diploma
New Hampshire	No	NA	No	NA

NA: Not Applicable

Table 6: Graduation Options for Students in States without High School Exit Exams

State	State Standard Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	How Graduation Requirements Differ for Students with Disabilities	Non-Standard Diploma Options	Description of Non-Standard Diploma Options (When Applicable)
North Dakota	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credits reduced • Alternate courses used • Performance criteria lowered • Others specifically noted in IEP 	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement
Oklahoma	Yes	Alternate courses used	No	NA
Oregon	Yes	Alternate courses; Others specifically noted in IEP	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement
Pennsylvania	Yes	Those specifically noted in IEP	No	NA
Rhode Island	Yes	Alternate courses; Performance criteria lowered	Yes	Certificate of Attendance
South Dakota	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	Yes	Local Certificate
Vermont	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	No	NA
West Virginia	Yes	Those specifically noted in an IEP	Yes	Modified Diploma
Wisconsin	Yes	Alternate courses; Performance criteria lowered; Modified curriculum; Others specifically noted in IEP	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP/Sp. Ed. Diploma • Certificate of Attendance • Certificate of Achievement
Wyoming	Yes	LEAs develop Body of Evidence plan with performance criteria	Yes	Certificate of Achievement

NA: Not Applicable

Table 7: State Graduation Policies for States with High School Exit Exams

State	High School Exit Exam (HSEE)	Receipt of Diploma Contingent on Passing HSEE	Accommodations on HSEE	Waivers/Appeals for HSEE	Alternative Assessment to HSEE
Alabama	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Alaska	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arizona	Class of 2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
California	Class of 2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Florida	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Georgia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Idaho	Class of 2006	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indiana	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Maryland	Class of 2009	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Minnesota	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Nevada	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
New Jersey	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Mexico	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
North Carolina	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ohio	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Texas	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Utah	Class of 2006	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Virginia	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Washington	Class of 2008	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 8: Passing Rates for First-Time High School Exit Examination Takers: Students with Disabilities and All Students

State	Mathematics			Reading		
	Students with Disabilities	All Students	Difference	Students with Disabilities	All Students	Difference
Alabama	46%	79%	-33	59%	88%	-29
Alaska	22%	67%	-45	22%	70%	-48
Arizona	10%	36%	-26	26%	59%	-33
California	30%	74%	-44	30%	75%	-45
Florida	N/a	54%	n/a	n/a	76%	n/a
Georgia	52%	91%	-39	69%	95%	-26
Idaho	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indiana	27%	67%	-40	22%	69%	-47
Louisiana	23%	68%	-45	18%	71%	-53
Maryland	19%	59%	-40	12%	53%	-41
Massachusetts	53%	80%	-27	70%	89%	-19
Minnesota	28%	71%	-43	40%	81%	-41
Mississippi	73%	91%	-18	44%	83%	-39
Nevada	6%	43%	-37	30%	77%	-47
New Jersey	22%	66%	-44	35%	80%	-45
New Mexico	43%	81%	-38	60%	89%	-29
New York	65%	83%	-18	61%	85%	-24
North Carolina (math/reading combined)	45%	78%	-33	45%	78%	-33
Ohio	n/a	68%	n/a	n/a	79%	n/a
South Carolina	57%	81%	-24	53%	84%	-31
Tennessee	41%	75%	-34	43%	87%	-44
Texas	55%	85%	-30	56%	87%	-31
Utah	18%	67%	-49	46%	83%	-37
Virginia	51%	80%	-29	70%	92%	-22
Washington	4%	39%	-35	12%	60%	-48
Average ¹⁴	36%	70%	-34	42%	79%	-37

Source: Center on Education Policy 2004; Arizona, California, Maryland, New York, South Carolina, and Utah state department Web sites

n/a: data not available

¹⁴ All states equally weighted.

Table 9: California Standards Test 2002–2004, Students with Disabilities vs. Students without Disabilities

		Reading			Mathematics		
		Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 4	Grade 8*	Grade 10*
2004 CST	Students with Disabilities % Proficient and Above	16	6	5	20	6	2
	Students without Disabilities % Proficient and Above	42	36	39	47	26	7
	Difference	-26	-30	-34	-27	-20	-5
2003 CST	Students with Disabilities % Proficient and Above	14	5	5	20	7	3
	Students without Disabilities % Proficient and Above	42	33	36	48	26	9
	Difference	-28	-28	-31	-28	-19	-6
2002 CST	Students with Disabilities % Proficient and Above	16	5	4	18	4	3
	Students without Disabilities % Proficient and Above	37	35	35	40	22	10
	Difference	-21	-30	-31	-22	-18	-7

*** For Grade 8 mathematics, the results are for the General Math test. Results from Algebra I are shown for Grade 10.**

Table 10: California Achievement Test 2003–2004, Students with Disabilities vs. Students without Disabilities

		Reading			Language			Mathematics			AV G DIF F
		Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	
2004 CAT/ 6	Students with Disabilities % Scoring at or Above 50 th NPR	15	10	12	19	10	11	23	13	13	
	Students without Disabilities % Scoring at or Above 50 th NPR	38	44	53	47	49	53	52	53	56	
	Difference	-23	-34	-41	-28	-39	-42	-29	-40	-43	-35.4
2003 CAT/ 6	Students with Disabilities % Scoring at or Above 50 th NPR	14	9	12	18	9	10	22	12	12	
	Students without Disabilities % Scoring at or Above 50 th NPR	37	44	53	46	47	53	51	52	55	
	Difference	-23	-35	-41	-28	-38	-43	-29	-40	-43	-35.6

Research into Alternative Assessment Formats

Data Sources

The following data sources were collected and synthesized by the study team as a basis for the recommendations on the alternative assessment formats presented in Section IV:

California Department of Education (2003)

The California State Board of Education approved the CAHSEE blueprints for language arts and mathematics on July 9, 2003. These documents set out the content standards covered by the CAHSEE and the number of test items aligned to each covered standard.

Calland (2003)

This presentation described the Kentucky Department of Education's newly developed computer-delivered test for students with disabilities.

Center on Education Policy (2004)

This is the third annual report on state exit exams produced by the Center on Education Policy, an independent advocate for public education in Washington, D.C. A product of the Center's multi-year study of exit exams, the report reviews the status, characteristics, and effects of exit exams. It focuses on developments that have occurred and research findings that have been released or publicized since the Center's August 2003 report, State High School Exit Exams: Put to the Test.

Center on Education Policy (2003)

This is the second annual report on state exit exams produced by the aforementioned Center on Education Policy. It is based on information collected from all states with current or planned exit exams, the Center's own research, and their review of other major research.

Driscoll (2004)

This letter from the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education to Directors of Approved Private Special Education Schools outlines the agency's finding that student participation in the state testing system is lower than expected at several approved private special education schools.

Hall and Mengal (2003)

This article defines curriculum-based evaluations and sets out their implications for access to the general curriculum.

Johnson and Thurlow (2003)

NCEO Technical Report 36 reviews the range of graduation requirements and diploma options across the United States for students with and

without disabilities. The report also considers the intended and unintended consequences of exit exams and single or multiple diploma options for students with disabilities.

Kadamus (2004)

This letter from the Deputy Commissioner of the Office for Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education, New York State Education Department, addressed to the Board of Regents outlines other states' approaches to using alternative assessments to meet graduation requirements. Indiana, Massachusetts, Ohio, Mississippi, Oregon, Georgia, and Maryland are featured.

Lehr and Thurlow (2003)

This issue of Policy Directions provides an overview of the key features of inclusive assessment and accountability. It focuses on how these components fit together to form a cohesive whole that supports the goals of standards-based reform.

Massachusetts Department of Education (2004a)

This administrative document gives a summary of 2003 statewide results of the MCAS for students with disabilities.

Massachusetts Department of Education (2004b)

This administrative document gives an overview of the MCAS and specific policies related to the testing of students with disabilities.

Massachusetts Department of Education (2004c)

This administrative document gives an overview and provides details of the Massachusetts Competency Determination process and results to date.

Oregon Department of Education (2004)

This administrative document defines the Oregon juried assessment and explains the process that students need to follow to have a juried assessment.

Quenemoen, Thompson, and Thurlow (2003)

NCEO Synthesis Report 50 examines five states' alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities.

Quenemoen, Thurlow, Moen, Thompson, and Morse (2003)

This report describes how assessing student performance on a regular and frequent basis can serve a pivotal role in an inclusive standards-based assessment and accountability system. The authors posit that in order to meet the higher expectations of current standards-based systems, educators need data throughout the year to project how students are doing compared with the grade-level standards. This will enable educators to

determine how best to accelerate student progress toward the proficiency standards.

Rabinowitz and Brandt (2001)

This brief describes the potential advantages of a fully implemented, computer-based assessment system. It concludes cautiously, laying out a series of issues that states must address before that potential can be realized.

Thompson and Thurlow (2003)

This report summarizes the results of the ninth survey of state directors of special education by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) at the University of Minnesota. It includes data from all 50 states and nine of the eleven federally funded entities. The report provides a snapshot of the new initiatives, trends, accomplishments, and emerging issues as states document the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

Thompson, Thurlow, Quenemoen, and Lehr (2002)

NCEO Synthesis Report 45 reviews the benefits and challenges of the “new frontier” of computer-based testing. Research is reviewed, and considerations for transforming paper and pencil assessments to computer-based assessments are identified.

Thurlow and Thompson (2000)

NCEO Policy Directions Number 10 considers issues related to graduation testing, including the number of retest opportunities, appeals processes, and accommodations policies.

Walz, Albus, Thompson, and Thurlow (2000)

This study examines the accommodation of taking a test in smaller sessions. In the study, a sample of 112 seventh and eighth graders from two rural and two urban schools in Minnesota took a set of test items under two different conditions: a single-day administration and a two-day administration. Students without disabilities outperformed students with disabilities under both conditions. Both groups had small (insignificant) gains under the multiple-day condition. The authors conclude that the results do not support the use of a multiple-day accommodation for improving student scores.

Zatta and Pullin (2004)

This paper examines ways in which alternate assessments as part of standards-based education reform may impact students with significant cognitive disabilities. It provides an overview of state efforts to implement alternate assessments for such students. An example is highlighted of how one state has begun to implement alternate assessment methods.

The Web sites of all 50 state departments of education were reviewed for relevant information on alternative assessment formats, alternative graduation requirements, and multiple diploma options. The states and their department of education Web addresses are listed below:

Table 11. State Web Sites

State	Web Address of the State's DOE
Alabama	http://www.alsde.edu/html/home.asp
Alaska	http://www.educ.state.ak.us/
Arizona	http://www.ade.az.gov/
Arkansas	http://arkedu.state.ar.us/
California	http://www.cde.ca.gov/
Colorado	http://www.cde.state.co.us/
Connecticut	http://www.state.ct.us/sde/
Delaware	http://www.doe.state.de.us/
Florida	http://www.fl DOE.org/
Georgia	http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/
Hawaii	http://doe.k12.hi.us/
Idaho	http://www.sde.state.id.us/Dept/
Illinois	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/
Indiana	http://www.doe.state.in.us/
Iowa	http://www.state.ia.us/educate/
Kansas	http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/
Kentucky	http://www.kde.state.ky.us/
Louisiana	http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp
Maine	http://www.state.me.us/education/homepage.htm
Maryland	http://www.msde.state.md.us/
Massachusetts	http://www.doe.mass.edu/
Michigan	http://www.michigan.gov/mde
Minnesota	http://cfl.state.mn.us/
Mississippi	http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/
Missouri	http://www.dese.state.mo.us/
Montana	http://www.opi.state.mt.us/
Nebraska	http://www.nde.state.ne.us/
Nevada	http://www.nde.state.nv.us/
New Hampshire	http://www.ed.state.nh.us/
New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/education/
New Mexico	http://sde.state.nm.us/
New York	http://www.nysed.gov/
North Carolina	http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/
North Dakota	http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/
Ohio	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/

Oklahoma	http://www.sde.state.ok.us/
Oregon	http://www.ode.state.or.us/
Pennsylvania	http://www.pde.state.pa.us/
Rhode Island	http://www.rido.net/
South Carolina	http://www.sde.state.sc.us/
South Dakota	http://www.state.sd.us/deca/
Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/education/
Texas	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/
Utah	http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/
Vermont	http://www.state.vt.us/educ/
Virginia	http://www.pen.k12.va.us/
Washington	http://www.k12.wa.us/
West Virginia	http://wvde.state.wv.us/
Wisconsin	http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/index.html
Wyoming	http://www.k12.wy.us/

Based on information contained in these reports, Web sites, and the WestEd study team's experience with innovative state and local programs, follow-up telephone conversations were held with individuals or representatives of the following offices:

Alaska Department of Education, Special Education Data Manager
Florida Department of Education, Exceptional Education
Florida Department of Education, FCAT Questions—Assessment and Evaluation
Florida Department of Education, Statistics
Florida Department of Education, Student Services
Fresno Unified School District, Special Education Office
Long Beach Unified School District, Office of Special Education
Los Angeles Unified School District, Special Education
Massachusetts Department of Education, Data Collection Processing
New York State Education Department, Alternative Assessment
New York State Education Department, Alternative Education
Oakland Unified School District, High School, Special Education
Oakland Unified School District, Vocational Education
Oregon Department of Education, Research Analyst
Oregon Department of Education, Special Education Specialist
Sacramento City Unified School District, Special Education Department, Director
San Bernardino City Unified School District, Special Education
San Bernardino City Unified School District, Alternative Programs, Charter Student Services
San Diego City Unified School District, Special Education Services
San Francisco Unified School District, Transition/Workability Program, Workability Coordinator
San Juan Unified School District, Special Education Field Office
Santa Ana Unified School District, Special Education

Texas Education Agency, Committee on People with Disabilities
Texas Education Agency, Student Assessment Division

Using the preceding data sources, the study team identified the following alternative assessment formats in use in other states: collections of evidence, checklists, teacher review committees, out-of-level testing, and lowered performance criteria. We describe research findings for those options identified by the advisory panel as appropriate for further examination.

Collections of Evidence

Research Findings. Most collections of evidence that are used as assessments are essentially student portfolios, even if they are not labeled as such. According to Quenemoen, Thompson, and Thurlow (2003, 6), a portfolio is

“... a collection of student work gathered to demonstrate student performance on specific skills and knowledge, generally linked to state content standards. Portfolio contents are individualized, and may include wide ranging samples of student learning, including but not limited to actual student work, observations recorded by multiple persons on multiple occasions, test results, record reviews, or even video or audio records of student performance. The portfolio contents are scored according to predefined scoring criteria, usually through application of a scoring rubric to the varying samples of student work.”

This approach has typically been used for students with significant cognitive disabilities as an alternate assessment for Title I systems accountability (prior to NCLB), not to satisfy a graduation requirement. The most common alternate option for statewide assessments, portfolios, are typically scored by teachers (Thompson and Thurlow 2003). As of 2001, portfolios were used in 24 states for Title I systems accountability (Quenemoen, Thompson, and Thurlow 2003). At least two states, Massachusetts and Oregon, have portfolio-like options for assessment at the high school level. Other states include review of a body of evidence or classroom work as part of panel review or appeals process. For example, in Massachusetts a superintendent may submit a portfolio of student work for review by a team of trained English and math teachers to determine whether that student meets graduation performance requirements.

One portfolio-like option is an IEP-linked body of evidence, defined as:

“a collection of student work demonstrating student achievement on standards-based IEP goals and objectives, measured against pre-determined scoring criteria. This approach is similar to a portfolio assessment, but may contain more focused or fewer pieces of evidence, with IEP

documentation available to support scoring processes. This evidence may meet dual purposes of documentation of IEP progress and the purpose of assessment.”

—Quenemoen, Thompson, and Thurlow (2003, 6)

Although a portfolio often requires more evidence than an IEP-linked body of evidence, the IEP-linked body of evidence may have more clearly defined content requirements than a portfolio.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel expressed concerns about the cost of a large-scale portfolio approach. The panel cited other technical and logistical concerns, including: standardizing data collection, training, and expectations across the state; ensuring objectivity through external monitoring; and setting the passing standard or cut score. The panel acknowledged that a portfolio approach would have the advantage of allowing for multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge.

Focused Retests

Research Findings. Generally, there is agreement among most testing experts that high-stakes decisions, such as high school graduation, should not be made on the basis of a single test. Multiple retesting opportunities are one way to address this concern (CEP 2004). Massachusetts is the only state offering a focused retest alternative to an exit examination. Thus, experience with this option is limited, and so data as to its viability and effectiveness are scarce. Technical studies suggest that reliable pass/fail information is attainable with 30 items or fewer (Feldt and Brennan 1989).

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel was generally supportive of a focused retest option, especially if it includes reporting of strand-level student results (to target remediation) from a full CAHSEE administration prior to the focused retest. Another salient aspect of the focused retest option is that it need not be applied exclusively to students with disabilities. In fact, Massachusetts makes no such distinction; this option is available to all students who have failed the state exam.

Computer Adaptive Testing

Research Findings. In a survey of state directors of special education, Thompson and Thurlow (2003) found that about 20 states were then in the process of developing computer-based assessments. Special education personnel were involved in the development process in 16 of these 20 states. Although computer delivered, none of these assessments was adaptive. Rabinowitz and Brandt (2001) identified computer adaptive testing (CAT) methods as allowing more reliable assessment using fewer items. The student encounters items targeted to his or her ability level, which fosters less student frustration and provides a more reliable measurement. CATs can be administered either several times each year or summatively at year’s end. CAT systems typically use Item Response Theory (IRT) to generate a built-in scale suitable for reporting progress (Quenemoen et al. 2003).

Even without the adaptive piece, computer-administered tests have been used successfully for students with disabilities (Calland 2003). For example, Virginia expressly included a subcontract to examine disability-related issues in its development of a computer-based assessment. Kentucky initiated Web-based administration of its core content assessment in the spring of 2003 (Thompson and Thurlow 2003). Kentucky's eligibility rules give some indication about what is needed for a successful computer-based system. Eligibility for the computerized assessment requires that: (1) a student's IEP or Section 504 plan specifies use of a reader as an instructional and assessment accommodation; (2) a student uses text or screen reader technology as a primary means of accessing printed material in the classroom on a routine basis; and (3) a student must have previously accessed and used the examination's practice area for familiarity with the site and use of a text or screen reader (Thompson and Thurlow 2003). Particularly for students with disabilities, the close relation between the student's experience in the classroom and the selected mode for assessment is key to the success of computer-administered tests (Thompson et al. 2002; Calland 2003).

Advisory Panel Deliberations. When considering computer-based testing as an option for California, the advisory panel felt that exploring a computer-delivered test was a good option. However, there was some concern over the adaptive methodology, the details of which are difficult for the general public and educators to understand. Such concerns are not limited to assessments for students with disabilities. They underscore the need for clear explanatory materials from any state considering the use of CATs.

CAHSEE “Mini-Tests”

Research Findings. Thompson and Thurlow (2003) point out that some students with disabilities may be easily stressed by taking tests. Shorter segments of the test administered at various points during the school year is not as overwhelming and may result in increased student participation. However, if the exam is divided into smaller parts, there is some concern that students would not take early administrations of tests as seriously as later administrations, where the consequences of failing are more imminent (CEP 2004). Shorter, more frequent mini-tests may also require more time away from classroom instruction and entail increased labor and cost.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. While the advisory panel identified time, labor, and cost as concerns, it also pointed to other administrative challenges. A system of mini-tests would need further specification, addressing the following questions:

- What would be the eligibility rules for the mini-tests?
- Who determines when students will be tested?
- How would test security be ensured?
- Could the results be tracked for accountability purposes?
- Can the state support the data management infrastructure needed by such a system?

- With administration dates so spread apart, what could the exam be said to measure?
- How does this option specifically help students with disabilities?

The panel asserted that this option could be helpful for all students, not only those with disabilities.

Performance Appeals

Research Findings. Under this option, students who fail the standard exit exam appeal to a governing body to have the exit exam waived as a graduation requirement. According to CEP (2004), 11 states allow these kinds of exemptions for students with disabilities. Eligibility for an appeals process is determined either on a case-by-case basis or if the student meets a predetermined set of criteria. An IEP team or committee typically makes this decision about eligibility for and/or outcome of the appeal. CEP (2004) describes four waiver options: adjudicated locally, adjudicated by state, stringent criteria for granting waiver, and lenient criteria for granting waiver. Table 12 below breaks out the details of the four waiver options (CEP 2004).

Table 12: Types of Waiver Options, Their Benefits and Drawbacks

	BENEFITS	DRAWBACKS
<i>Waivers in general</i>	<i>Perceived as fair for students who were ill, suffered death in family, have difficulties taking tests, etc.</i>	<i>Cost and time; some students may see waivers as a way out of graduation requirements; some teachers and administrators may urge waivers for lower-achieving students</i>
OPTIONS	BENEFITS	DRAWBACKS
Adjudicated locally—District-level officials decide whether to grant waivers (e.g., IN)	Perceived as fair; decision is made “close to home”; extenuating circumstances may be easier to confirm	Local officials may have incentives to grant many waivers to maintain or increase graduation rates; may be perceived as unfair because some districts may be more lenient in granting waivers than others
Adjudicated by state—State-level officials decide whether to grant waivers (e.g., GA)	May be perceived as more fair because all districts would be treated equally	May be administrative burden on state; no familiarity with the individual requesting the waiver
Stringent criteria for granting waivers—Legislation sets high bar for eligibility, such as grades,	Weeds out unqualified students who may be better served by remediation or other existing interventions; reduces number of requests; may be seen as more	Fewer students may receive diplomas; administrative burden of collecting various pieces of student data

attendance, etc. (e.g., OH, MA)	objective because reasons for granting or not granting a waiver are more detailed	
Lenient criteria for granting waivers— Legislation sets low bar for eligibility (e.g., GA, MS)	More students can apply under a wider variety of circumstances, possibly more students receive diplomas	Officials may have incentives to grant many waivers to maintain or increase graduation rates; could be seen as watering down the meaning of a diploma; process may be seen as less fair, or may require more work, if criteria are not clear and detailed

Source: CEP (2004)

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel identified many of the same benefits and challenges that appear in the published research on performance appeals. Specifically, many panel members appreciated that an appeals process could consider multiple factors, rather than relying on a single test score. The appeals could also use indicators that are more directly linked to each student’s educational program. On the other hand, the panel expressed a concern that this option could be overused unless the state established clear criteria for when a waiver could be considered. Furthermore, the panel noted that this option could lead to numerous lawsuits without ensuring better outcomes for students with disabilities.

Research into Graduation Requirements

Data Sources

The following data sources were collected and synthesized by the study team as a basis for the recommendations on the graduation requirements presented in Section IV:

California Department of Education (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Center on Education Policy (2004; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Center on Education Policy (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Educational Policy Research Reform Institute (EPRRI; 2002)

This review examines the traditional role of the high school diploma in the current context of standards-based reform, particularly as it relates to students with diverse educational needs and those with disabilities.

Guy, Shin, Lee, and Thurlow (1999)

The purpose of NCEO Technical Report 24 is to document current requirements for graduation and note the types of exit options available to students with and without disabilities. A survey was administered. Respondents were state assessment directors and transition specialists from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Johnson and Thurlow (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Massachusetts Department of Education (2004a; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Quenemoen, Thompson, and Thurlow (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Quenemoen, Thurlow, Moen, Thompson, and Morse (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Thompson and Thurlow (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Thompson, Thurlow, Quenemoen, and Lehr (2002; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Thurlow and Thompson (2000; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

U.S. Department of Education (2002)

The closing section of the annual report to Congress on the implementation of IDEA addresses high school graduation among students with disabilities, including graduation and dropout rates by type of disability.

In addition to these reports, the Web sites of all 50 state departments of education were visited as part of the research into this section (see Table 11 for listing of Web sites). Follow-up telephone conversations were held with the following individuals or representatives of the following offices:

Alaska Department of Education, Special Education Data Manager
Florida Department of Education, Exceptional Education
Florida Department of Education, FCAT Questions—Assessment and Evaluation
Florida Department of Education, Statistics
Florida Department of Education, Student Services
Massachusetts Department of Education, Data Collection Processing
New York State Education Department, Alternative Assessment
New York State Education Department, Alternative Education
Oregon Department of Education, Research Analyst
Oregon Department of Education, Special Education Specialist
Texas Education Agency, Committee on People with Disabilities
Texas Education Agency, Student Assessment Division

Using the preceding data sources, the study team identified the following graduation requirement options in use in other states: alternate courses approved by IEP team,

lowered performance criteria, individual consideration in a state-managed process, modified curriculum, credits reduced, LEA substitution of special education courses for regular education courses, IEP specification of requirements, and LEA-developed Body of Evidence plan with performance criteria. We describe research findings for those options identified by the advisory panel as appropriate for further examination.

Equivalent CAHSEE Courses

Research Findings. The publicly available CAHSEE blueprints list the standards tested by the language arts and mathematics exams and the relative weight (that is, the number of items) of each standard (CDE 2003). The study team reviewed these and all other CAHSEE administrative documents available on the CDE Web site (such as testing schedules and test regulations). Based on this review, the study team concluded that it would be possible to develop and offer courses based on the CAHSEE content standards. However, it would be difficult to standardize and monitor such courses across the state. As stated in Section IV, an option that allows students to substitute equivalent CAHSEE courses for some or all parts of the examination would require evaluation of the courses against the California content standards on which CAHSEE is based.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel cited many challenges with allowing courses to substitute for the CAHSEE. Chief among the challenges is standardization: the panel was concerned that adequate course replacements would vary significantly from district to district. Moreover, part of the reason that the CAHSEE was implemented in the first place is that coursework alone was deemed insufficient to ensure that students have the necessary skills to succeed after high school. This point also surfaced several times during the study team's interviews with legislative staff and other policymakers.

Alternate Courses as Core Courses

Research Findings. Under this option, courses whose content differs from the graduation content standards are counted as core courses required for graduation. Students may also take substitute courses to work on E/LA and math skills. Substitute courses cover the same general content as that required of other students, but with an emphasis on practical applications. Guy et al. (1999) provide examples, such as taking consumer mathematics rather than an advanced mathematics course such as Algebra or Geometry, or taking a reading class on independent living rather than one on world literature.

As of 2003, substitute courses were used by 19 states for students with disabilities to qualify them to receive a standard diploma (Johnson and Thurlow 2003). Modifying coursework to meet course credit requirements is the most common option provided to students with disabilities. One example is allowing a student to earn required social studies credits by participating in a work-study program. Some states may opt to allow, via waiver, alternate courses to earn required course credits.

According to CEP (2004), providing students with an alternate academic program provides opportunities for remediation. As noted by Thurlow and Thompson (2000), this

option recognizes that not all students demonstrate knowledge in the same way. Allowing alternate courses to be used as core courses for graduation may avoid student frustration or trauma (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

In some states, students with disabilities can graduate with a regular diploma by following an alternate academic program. For example, in North Carolina and New Mexico the IEP team determines which of three pathways a student can take: standard pathway, career readiness pathway, or ability pathway. Under all three options the student can substitute classes as appropriate at the student's ability level. The team carefully selects a path to a regular diploma. These alternate academic programs provide students with necessary opportunities for remediation. The courses these students take are content rich, focused on specific outcomes, and still must be aligned to grade-level content (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

This option reflects the belief that some students with disabilities have a different set of abilities, knowledge, and skills, and need an exit option that reflects that difference. Students with disabilities may be working on different standards than those applied to other students. This supports the argument for other paths to a diploma, where students are provided an opportunity to learn the material on which their graduation status will be determined, such as counting alternate courses as core courses required for graduation (Thurlow and Thompson 2000).

Guy et al. (1999) argue that counting alternate courses may “water-down” the core course content, resulting in a “watered-down” diploma. There is a basic lack of good data to verify consistency in modified coursework, so standard offerings and guidelines from the state would be of critical importance. The study team could find no research that identifies principles to support state guidelines for modified coursework specifically, but the general recommendations of Guy et al. (1999) point to some promising ideas. The researchers recommend that graduation requirements in general have the following features:

- include specifics as to why requirements might be different for different subgroups of students;
- relate directly to the skills needed after high school;
- provide sufficient time for students who need more time to gain the knowledge and skills to meet the graduation standard;
- have a phase-in period of at least four years for all students, and as much as twelve years for students with disabilities; and
- use multiple, relevant sources of information about students' knowledge and skills.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel brought its knowledge of the California context to the analysis of this option, identifying other concerns. With the shortage of highly qualified teachers in courses that cover the full content standards, there was apprehension that students in alternate courses would not be taught by highly qualified teachers (see also CEP 2003). Another concern was that the alternate courses

might be used as an easy “out” for educating students with disabilities. Hence, the state would want to ensure that no students were being denied access to general education courses (see also EPRRI 2002). A competing view was that these alternate courses *increase* accessibility to the curriculum, since more students would be exposed to course material that for them is challenging but still within their mastery. (This tension is also explored in Quenemoen et al. 2003.)

The panel identified positive and negative aspects of how this option could be implemented. They felt that standardization would be served by having a statewide curriculum council that would set criteria for acceptable coursework. If this option allowed students to access job-training courses, the burden of setting up this system could be counterbalanced by improved employment opportunities for students. The panel’s concerns about consistency was two-fold: (1) the state might not be able to ensure consistency of the course content between schools and districts; and (2) small schools and districts may not have the resources to provide additional courses.

IEP Specification of Requirements

Research Findings. This option would allow an IEP team to change state-determined graduation requirements. According to Guy et al. (1999), approximately 10 percent of the states with course credit requirements permit students to receive a standard diploma by completing their IEPs.

Under this option, the IEP team is responsible for ensuring that instruction is aligned with test content. Furthermore, the IEP team must ensure that the student is assessed on content in the general education curriculum by aligning IEP standards to grade-level standards. It is important that students are provided adequate opportunities to learn the material on which they are being tested (EPRRI 2002; CEP 2003; Guy et al. 1999; U.S. Department of Education 2002).

This option faces the challenge of lower-level content that is not aligned to grade level standards. The IEP team could, in effect, change state requirements by eliminating the need for students to pass a graduation test. Guy et al. (1999, 14) argue that IEP completion is not a universally accepted way for students with disabilities to meet graduation requirements. “It is unclear what is occurring when an IEP team decides that state- or district-determined criteria do not apply (presumably for individual students).... The fact that decisions can be made to remove graduation requirements for students with disabilities may suggest that these students are being held to different standards than other students.” There is an emerging consensus across states that alternate achievement standards are appropriate for a very small percentage of students who have significant cognitive disabilities. At the same time, these other paths should have content-rich courses and learning context focused on specifically defined career pathways or post-school outcomes, taught by people who are certified to teach that content.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel expressed significant concerns about this option. It would place a tremendous burden—and pressure—on the IEP team. For

example, the team could face pressure to reduce graduation requirements, as both parents and principals have a strong interest in seeing students graduate. This is true now more than ever given NCLB. The panel was also concerned that many students would request this process, thereby increasing the time pressure of all parties involved in the decision. Increases in time commitments of the IEP team would entail increased cost. As with many of the other options, reliability, standardization, and consistency were also identified as challenges.

The panel saw some benefits to this option, however. They observed that accessibility to graduation requirements for students with disabilities could increase because the IEP team is uniquely aware of the student's abilities and can ensure that the student receives proper support. The IEP team also has the responsibility under IDEA to ensure that a student's IEP includes a statement of how the student will progress in the general education curriculum (EPRRI 2002). To the extent that the IEP team can effectively promote the student's interests, this is an attractive option.

Research into Diploma Options

Data Sources

The following data sources were collected and synthesized by the study team as a basis for the recommendations on the diploma options presented in Section IV:

Center on Education Policy (2004; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Center on Education Policy (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Educational Policy Research Reform Institute (EPRRI; 2002; see summary in graduation requirements subsection)

Johnson and Thurlow (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Johnson, Thurlow, Cosio, and Bremer (2005a)

This Information Brief summarizes diploma options, who determines them, the benefits of multiple options, and the benefits of a single diploma option.

Kadamus (2004; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Thompson and Thurlow (2003; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

Thurlow and Thompson (2000; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

U.S. Department of Education (2002; see summary in graduation requirements subsection)

Zatta and Pullin (2004; see summary in alternative assessments subsection)

In addition to these reports, the Web sites of all 50 state departments of education were visited as part of the research into this section (see Table 11 for listing of sites). Follow-up telephone conversations were held with representatives of the following offices in California:

Fresno Unified School District, Special Education Office
 Long Beach Unified School District, Office of Special Education
 Los Angeles Unified School District, Special Education
 Oakland Unified School District, High School, Special Education
 Oakland Unified School District, Vocational Education
 Sacramento City Unified School District, Special Education Department
 San Bernardino City Unified School District, Special Education
 San Bernardino City Unified School District, Alternative Programs, Charter Student Services
 San Diego City Unified School District, Special Education Services
 San Francisco Unified School District, Transition/Workability Program
 San Juan Unified School District, Special Education Field Office
 Santa Ana Unified School District, Special Education

Using the preceding data sources, the study team identified the following diploma options in use in other states: occupational diploma, local certificate, certificate of achievement, certificate of attendance, IEP/special education diploma, basic, standard, distinguished, certificate of performance, seal options, multiple pathways to a single diploma (standard, career readiness, and ability), different high school exit exam options, and modified standard diploma. We describe research findings for those options identified by the advisory panel as appropriate for further examination.

Multiple Tiers

Research Findings. Some states have experimented with various “tiered” diplomas, whereby students are awarded different types of diplomas contingent on their performance on an exit exam or other academic measures. Multiple achievement types can be identified, usually in three tiers, for adequate, good, and exemplary performance. Although the use of multiple diplomas is described in several reports and Web sites, the study team found no specific research on the effects of tiered diplomas on students.

Johnson and Thurlow (2003) argue that providing students with more diploma options could “maintain student motivation and reduce frustrations that could otherwise lead

students to drop out” (p. 8). The authors further suggest that high academic standards are maintained for the standard diploma when multiple options are available. Schools are afforded the ability to recognize students for higher levels of performance. Employers and postsecondary education institutions benefit from having a better idea of the students’ actual skills and abilities, based on the type of diploma awarded.

CEP (2004) reinforce that having multiple diploma options available to recognize different levels of achievement may ultimately lead to increases in the number of students receiving a diploma. The authors state that this option “recognizes efforts of high performing students; it recognizes that low performing students attended classes and fulfilled requirements; and it may encourage some students to try harder” (p. 111).

Those opposed to tiered diplomas voice concern about the exact value of the different diploma options. There is also concern for students who go through school with a separate, less challenging curriculum and are awarded a separate, lower level diploma. Clearly, non-standard diplomas may be viewed as substandard if they reflect lower levels of performance than standard diplomas. CEP (2004) cites community opposition to “second class” diplomas out of concern that diplomas are awarded for lesser achievements. Many may question what the diploma holder has actually learned, as there may be confusion about the exact value and meaning of each diploma.

This option may result in reduced access to the general education curriculum because a diploma can be awarded without a requirement to pass general education classes. IEP teams may fail to hold special education students accountable because a diploma may be awarded that does not require higher expectations of the student. Reduced access to postsecondary education options may also occur because institutions may not recognize all of the diploma options. As the NCEO researchers stated, “there is little research on the value or merit of alternative diplomas in terms of a student’s future opportunities for education or employment” (Johnson and Thurlow 2003, 8).

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel generally supported the idea of a multiple tier diploma as a means to communicate information about a student’s level of achievement. There was broad support for using the term “diploma,” even for situations where the CAHSEE is not passed because the term “diploma” has come to be associated with satisfactory school completion. The panel generally saw the term “certificate” as stigmatizing.

One viewpoint expressed within the panel is that CAHSEE is a major factor in the movement to give the diploma a more precise meaning that is associated with a higher level of achievement. There was some concern that the meaning of the diploma would become diluted in a multiple-tier system; others felt that the option had the potential to communicate more information. The panel cited states like Florida and Nebraska, where multiple diploma options are available, apparently without significant confusion.

Multiple Levels

Research Findings. Whereas the multiple-tier diplomas represent a clear hierarchy of lower to higher achievement, the multiple-level diploma links different types of academic achievement directly to postsecondary, real-world expectations. As of 2003, no state had attempted to create a diploma system based on a task analysis of different postsecondary opportunities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003). This option would feature many of the same benefits and challenges as the multiple-tier option, but would also require consensus about the salient features of postsecondary opportunities and how experiences in high school would align with those features.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel has yet to discuss the multiple-level diploma option. [xx fill in after 3/24/05 discussions xx]

Career-Technical Diploma

Research Findings. This diploma option is designed for entry into the work force rather than postsecondary education. In order to receive a career-technical diploma in Mississippi, students must: complete 26 course credits, including a variety of academic courses with life and skills focus; produce a portfolio to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of this curriculum; and work 540 hours during school (CEP 2004). As of 2003, four states (Alabama, Colorado, Missouri, and Nebraska) offered career-technical diplomas (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

The underlying assumption for this option is that students who earn a career-technical diploma would gain life skills and would thus be better prepared for future employment. This diploma option can provide a wide variety of pathways as to how students can attain a diploma. The availability of more options may result in increased student motivation and achievement (Johnson and Thurlow 2003). An occupational diploma provides students with documentation of specific life skills that can help open more avenues for achieving gainful employment. Johnson and Thurlow (2003) assert that this option encourages students to focus on the transition out of high school and the development of life and job skills. Additionally, this diploma option takes into consideration individual interests, career preferences, and needs.

CEP (2004) found that this option allows for a wider variety of classes to be used toward graduation requirements. Attainment of this diploma is more stringent than a certificate of attendance because it requires evidence of completing coursework.

Several experts concur that this option involves unknown future implications in terms of employment and postsecondary education. There may be confusion as to the exact value of a career-technical diploma. Although this diploma offers the promise of working opportunities to students with disabilities, some opportunities may not be accessible. A career-technical diploma may not be accepted as a valid recognition of high school completion because the focus may not promote access to the general education curriculum. Moreover, this diploma option may place students at a disadvantage in their

future participation in postsecondary education and employment (Johnson and Thurlow 2003; Thurlow and Thompson 2000).

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The advisory panel felt that a career-technical diploma could be a valuable option to all students. The panel expressed concerns, however, about the availability of this option in smaller schools and districts. The panel wondered whether, in a time when the curriculum is being narrowed, schools could realistically provide or support the classes and other educational experiences that would lead to a career-technical diploma.

Special Education Diploma

Research Findings. Thurlow and Thompson (2000) report that only students with IEPs are eligible to pursue this diploma. As of 2003, 12 states award special education diplomas for students with disabilities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003). They argue that not all students demonstrate high-level knowledge and skills in the same way. This suggests searching for other avenues to a diploma that are made available to students.

Thurlow and Thompson (2000) assert that this option recognizes that students with disabilities may be working toward satisfying different standards than other students and that their achievements still merit recognition. One approach taken to identify these students is to have special notations, either on the standard diploma or on a related document.

As recognized in other alternative diploma options, the special education diploma option may place students at a disadvantage regarding access to postsecondary education or future employment opportunities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003; Thurlow and Thompson 2000). Providing students with a special education diploma has unknown future implications for employment and postsecondary education. This option does not promote access to the general education curriculum because the graduation requirements for a special education diploma may differ from the standard requirements for general education students. Upon entry into postsecondary education programs, courses taken to achieve alternative diplomas may be insufficient to meet minimum entry requirements in many postsecondary education programs. In addition, this option may “flag” those students receiving special education services. Because the requirements are different, this diploma option is open to legal challenges in the future, particularly when the criteria used to place students with disabilities in these diploma “tracks” are not well understood by parents and students (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

Advisory Panel Deliberations. Some of the strongest responses from the advisory panel were expressed in opposition to this option. The advisory panel acknowledged the potential benefits of this option, but only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The panel members cited the stigma attached to this option as their chief concern of using this option more widely.

Standardization of Waiver Process

Research Findings. The study team found no research directly addressing this option. The research of Johnson and Thurlow (2003), cited earlier, reports that providing students with multiple diploma options might increase the number of students receiving diplomas. A standardized waiver process could be one such option.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. The panel’s stance is that appeals are important in any system of this scope. If students with an IEP had their plans determine their diploma paths, then this option would be reserved only for extreme cases that were not addressed by other means. The panel reacted negatively to use of the term “waiver,” as it suggested to them an evasion of requirements. The term “appeal” retains students’ dignity, according to the panel.

Certificates of Completion

Research Findings. Thurlow and Thompson (2000) describe certificates that recognize and document various degrees of performance or attainment. Requirements vary considerably in that students with IEPs may or may not be allowed to achieve this certificate in different ways. As of 2003, a certificate of attendance was used in 17 states, a certificate of achievement in 11 states, and a certificate of completion in 3 states for students with disabilities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003).

Thurlow and Thompson (2000) maintain that providing a variety of diploma options retains the reliability of the standard diploma while providing an option for low-achieving students. Students will receive at least some minimum credential that signifies successful completion of high school. However, the certificate option may place students at a disadvantage regarding access to future opportunities (Johnson and Thurlow 2003; Thurlow and Thompson 2000).

Students who use this alternate diploma to get into community colleges face the challenge of not being eligible for federal student aid. Thurlow and Thompson (2000) note that having a certificate may “flag” students receiving special education services. Providing a certificate of attendance may be unfair to these students, since it could be argued that they have met the standards and simply are not being allowed to show their mastery of them. Johnson and Thurlow (2003) cite research referencing preliminary data from a study in New Mexico that indicates that most college admissions offices had not heard of the certificate of completion for students with disabilities.

Advisory Panel Deliberations. As with the special education diploma option, the advisory panel favored this option only for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The panel observed that there is value and power in the word “diploma” and advised that a “certificate” carries a stigma. Instead, having a base “diploma” would be preferable (see “Multiple Tiers” above).

Summary

This examination of states' practices and policies shows that states are wrestling with how their exit examinations, graduation requirements, and diploma options should be applied to students with disabilities. While there is yet to be any emerging consensus about what constitutes ideal policies and practices, the research literature points to potential benefits and challenges of different approaches. The SB 964 advisory panel identified other important considerations, giving testimony on how different options would likely be received in California. These varied sources helped shape the recommendations that are the crux of this report.

HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES (SENATE BILL 964)

VI. NEXT STEPS

In previous sections, we referred to a set of steps necessary to implement some or all of the recommendations included in this report. Some of the recommendations require statutory action by the Legislature. The State Board of Education can implement others via changes in regulations. Still others can be implemented directly by CDE or involve action at the district or school level.

This section details how such changes can be put into effect. We begin with a discussion of the role of the Legislature and State Board of Education in implementing those recommendations that are governed by the Education Code or regulations. We then provide details of key aspects of the various research studies we have indicated are essential over the next two years and beyond in order to implement the recommendations. Finally, we end by summarizing key steps for educators to take, in particular CDE and local educators, if the recommendations are to be implemented successfully and thus lead to the desired outcomes.

Implementing the Recommendations: Role of the Legislature and State Board of Education

CAHSEE. Two acts of the Legislature are relevant to CAHSEE as a high school graduation requirement. SB 2 (Chapter 1 of 1999, 1st Extra Session) called for the development of an exit examination for California students and laid out a process by which it would be developed and piloted to ensure reliability, validity, and fairness. In 2001, recognizing the lack of readiness for the majority of students in California, AB 1609 allowed the State Board of Education one opportunity to delay implementation of CAHSEE as a graduation requirement. The State Board used this authority to move the CAHSEE requirement to the 2005-06 school year. Thus, any additional delay would require additional legislative action.

SB 2 allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to determine, with State Board approval, the “design and composition of the exit examination.” This implies that the use of any *equivalent alternative* to CAHSEE may not require legislative action but could be authorized via regulation. However, since SB 2 indicates that CAHSEE needs to be based on the adopted state content standards, use of a *non-equivalent alternative* would require additional legislation; hence our hesitation to recommend any alternative assessment format unless strong evidence of equivalence to CAHSEE is available.

Relevant provisions of SB 2 and AB 1609 are included on the following pages.

Text of Education Code 60850—from SB 2 (CAHSEE)

60850. (a) The Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the approval of the State Board of Education, shall develop a high school exit examination in English language arts and mathematics in accordance with the statewide academically rigorous content standards adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to Section 60605. To facilitate the development of the examination, the superintendent shall review any existing high school subject matter examinations that are linked to, or can be aligned with, the statewide academically rigorous content standards for English language arts and mathematics adopted by the State Board of Education. By October 1, 2000, the State Board of Education shall adopt a high school exit examination that is aligned with statewide academically rigorous content standards.

(b) The Superintendent of Public Instruction, with the approval of the State Board of Education, shall establish a High School Exit Examination Standards Panel to assist in the design and composition of the exit examination and to ensure that the examination is aligned with statewide academically rigorous content standards. Members of the panel shall include, but are not limited to, teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and the general public. Members of the panel shall serve without compensation for a term of two years and shall be representative of the state's ethnic and cultural diversity and gender balance. The superintendent shall also make the best effort to ensure representation of the state's diversity relative to urban, suburban, and rural areas. The State Department of Education shall provide staff to the panel.

(c) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall require that the examination be field tested before actual implementation to ensure that the examination is free from bias and that its content is valid and reliable.

(d) Before the State Board of Education adopts the exit examination, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall submit the examination to the Statewide Pupil Assessment Review Panel established pursuant to Section 60606. The panel shall review all items or questions to ensure that the content of the examination complies with the requirements of Section 60614.

(e) The exit examination prescribed in subdivision (a) shall conform to the following standards or it shall not be required as a condition of graduation:

(1) The examination may not be administered to a pupil who did not receive adequate notice as provided for in paragraph (1) of subdivision (f) regarding the test.

(2) The examination, regardless of federal financial participation, shall comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 2000d et seq.), its implementing regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 100), and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1701).

Text of Education Code 60850—from SB 2 (CAHSEE) (cont.)

(3) The examination shall have instructional and curricular validity.

(4) The examination shall be scored as a criterion referenced examination.

(f) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) “Accommodations” means any variation in the assessment environment or process that does not fundamentally alter what the test measures or affect the comparability of scores. “Accommodations” may include variations in scheduling, setting, aids, equipment, and presentation format.

(2) “Adequate notice” means that the pupil and his or her parent or guardian have received written notice, at the commencement of the pupil’s 9th grade, and each year thereafter through the annual notification process established pursuant to Section 48980, or if a transfer pupil, at the time the pupil transfers. A pupil who has taken the exit examination in the 10th grade is deemed to have had “adequate notice” as defined in this paragraph.

(3) “Curricular validity” means that the examination tests for content found in the instructional textbooks. For the purposes of this section, any textbook or other instructional material adopted pursuant to this code and consistent with the state’s adopted curriculum frameworks shall be deemed to satisfy this definition.

(4) “Instructional validity” means that the examination is consistent with what is expected to be taught. For the purposes of this section, instruction that is consistent with the state’s adopted curriculum frameworks for the subjects tested shall be deemed to satisfy this definition.

(5) “Modification” means any variation in the assessment environment or process that fundamentally alters what the test measures or affects the comparability of scores.

(g) The examination shall be offered to individuals with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, in accordance with paragraph (17) of subsection (a) of Section 1412 of Title 20 of the United States Code and Section 794 and following of Title 29 of the United States Code. Individuals with exceptional needs shall be administered the examination with appropriate accommodations, where necessary.

(h) Nothing in this chapter shall prohibit a school district from requiring pupils to pass additional exit examinations approved by the governing board of the school district as a condition for graduation.

Text of Education Code 60859 from AB 1609

60859. (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, on or before August 1, 2003, the State Board of Education may delay the date upon which each pupil completing grade 12 is required to successfully pass the high school exit examination as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school to a date other than the 2003-04 school year if, in reviewing the report of the independent study, the State Board of Education determines that the test development process or the implementation of standards-based instruction does not meet the required standards for a test of this nature.

(b) After August 1, 2003, the State Board of Education may not delay the date upon which each pupil completing grade 12 is required to successfully pass the high school exit examination as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation or a condition of graduation from high school.

Graduation Requirements and Multiple Diploma Options. In order to change the state requirements for earning a high school diploma, the Legislature would have to modify the Education Code. This is true whether the change entails dropping course requirements or creating an option for a multiple diploma system. Appendix J includes the sections in the Education Code that would need to be changed to implement the graduation requirement recommendations.

In addition, the State Board of Education adopts the regulations that set out the administrative requirements and procedures for students, teachers, and administrators. As such, the Board would also have a role in implementing many of the recommendations regarding graduation requirements and multiple diploma options.

Course Requirements. Because course requirements for graduation are in the Education Code, changes to these requirements would require action by the Legislature. Sections 51220-51228 describe the state-required courses (especially in 51225.3) and include, in 51220(k), the authority of the district to set other requirements. Section 51225.3 spells out the course requirements for a high school diploma.

While section (a) below lists the categories of classes students must complete, it does not specify the actual content of these courses. The State Board of Education has a major role in determining content, and does so primarily through the development of curricular frameworks and content standards. The set of recommendations that deal with the content of courses that are credited toward a diploma can be implemented by the Board, as long as the number of courses required is consistent with the Education Code's course requirement provisions in Section 51225.3. Section 51225.3(b) appears to give the Board much flexibility relative to how students can meet the required course of study. This

authority may be a useful model in determining possible alternative assessment formats as well.

Text of Education Code: Course Requirements

51225.3. (a) Commencing with the 1988-89 school year, no pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school who, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, has not completed all of the following:

(1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified.

(A) Three courses in English.

(B) Two courses in mathematics.

(C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.

(D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics.

(E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

(F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.

(2) Other coursework as the governing board of the school district may by rule specify.

(b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study which may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, career technical education classes offered in high schools, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary institution. Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.

Establishing a Multiple Diploma System. The Legislature would also need to change Education Code Sections 51410-51412 and 56390-56392 to develop a multiple diploma system, such as the tiered system recommended in Section IV. This applies particularly to those options and recommendations involving a base diploma below the CAHSEE content level or below the expectations of the state content standards and curriculum

frameworks (see below). The current Education Code also specifically rejects the concept of a “special education diploma.”

Text of Education Code: Diploma Options

51410. No diploma, certificate or other document which is conferred upon a pupil as evidence of his completion of a prescribed course of study or training shall bear any distinctive marking or words which indicate that the pupil upon whom it was conferred was, for purposes of his course of study or training, placed within a particular classification based upon his intellectual or mental capacity.

The provisions of this section shall not be construed to prevent a diploma, certificate or other document from indicating that the pupil upon whom it is conferred maintained exceptionally high grades during his course of study or training, or that he completed his course with honors, or to prevent the governing board of any school district from publicizing such information.

51411. No governing board of any school district maintaining a high school shall require as a condition for graduation from the high schools within the district that a pupil have resided within the district for any minimum length of time.

51412. No diploma, certificate or other document, except transcripts and letters of recommendation, shall be conferred on a pupil as evidence of completion of a prescribed course of study or training, or of satisfactory attendance, unless the pupil has met the standards of proficiency in basic skills prescribed by the governing board of the high school district, or equivalent thereof.

56390. Notwithstanding Section 51412 or any other provision of law, a local educational agency may award an individual with exceptional needs a certificate or document of educational achievement or completion if the requirements of subdivision (a), (b), or (c) are met.

(a) The individual has satisfactorily completed a prescribed alternative course of study approved by the governing board of the school district in which the individual attended school or the school district with jurisdiction over the individual and identified in his or her individualized education program.

(b) The individual has satisfactorily met his or her individualized education program goals and objectives during high school as determined by the individualized education program team.

(c) The individual has satisfactorily attended high school, participated in the instruction as prescribed in his or her individualized education program, and has met the objectives of the statement of transition services.

Text of Education Code: Diploma Options (cont.)

56391. An individual with exceptional needs who meets the criteria for a certificate or document described in Section 56390 shall be eligible to participate in any graduation ceremony and any school activity related to graduation in which a pupil of similar age without disabilities would be eligible to participate. The right to participate in graduation ceremonies does not equate a certificate or document described in Section 56390 with a regular high school diploma.

56392. It is not the intent of the Legislature by enacting this chapter to eliminate the opportunity for an individual with exceptional needs to earn a standard diploma issued by a local or state educational agency when the pupil has completed the prescribed course of study and has passed the proficiency requirements with or without differential standards.

Implementing the Recommendations: Research Agenda

Two main categories of research are proposed in the *Recommendations* section. The first deals with determining the *readiness* of students with disabilities to meet the CAHSEE-level standards. The second comprises *technical* and *feasibility* research on implementation of various alternatives to CAHSEE, particularly with respect to the alternative assessment formats. Both categories of research are described below.

Readiness Research. CDE has over the past several years sponsored research studies related to CAHSEE in general and students with disabilities in particular. This research has been used to guide CAHSEE technical and policy issues. For example, HumRRO (2001) prompted the enactment of AB 1609, the act which led to delaying the original CAHSEE requirement to the 2005-06 school year. This research agenda is ongoing with various internal and external CAHSEE technical and evaluation efforts. The study team believes that additional research, focusing directly on determining when students with disabilities are fully ready to demonstrate their mastery of the California content standards, is essential at this time. Several research questions will be relevant to that determination, including:

- *IEP process:* Are IEP teams across the state sufficiently familiar with CAHSEE expectations (content and format)? Are IEP teams including CAHSEE-level standards in students with disabilities' education plans? Can IEP teams distinguish between students with disabilities capable of meeting CAHSEE standards from those with significant cognitive disabilities that make the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) a more appropriate option? Do IEPs developed for elementary-age students include instructional expectations that will prepare students for the rigors of high school? Are IEP teams including all appropriate assessment accommodations into students'

plans? Are such accommodations linked to standard instructional practices for each student?

- *Instructional process:* Are teachers of students with disabilities trained in issues specific to these students' instructional needs (by specific disability types)? Are textbooks and other source materials available and appropriate for the instructional needs of students with disabilities? Have advancements in instructional software and other technologies designed for students with disabilities been implemented universally across the state? Are teachers of students with disabilities trained in interpreting test score data and able to plan appropriate instruction for their students based on available test information (for CAHSEE and other components of the statewide assessment program, in particular the California Standards Test)?
- *Assessment process:* Do assessment practices align with instructional practices for CAHSEE and other components of the statewide assessment program? Have *Universal Design* principles been fully implemented for CAHSEE and other components of the statewide assessment program? Are all valid accommodations and modifications allowed on CAHSEE and other components of the statewide assessment program?

As previously mentioned, CDE should develop and implement a comprehensive three-part research agenda on *readiness* issues to answer these and other questions. This includes: (1) conduct in-house research; (2) sponsor additional research such as the current contract to HumRRO to serve as a CAHSEE independent evaluator; and (3) monitor research in other states and assessment programs. The three coordinated sets of activities proposed are described below.

- *Conduct in-house research.* The state has already collected large amounts of data related to CAHSEE development, implementation, and technical qualities. Similar efforts are underway for other components of the statewide assessment program. These ongoing studies should be reviewed to determine if they are focusing adequately on questions related to the readiness of students with disabilities. CDE staff, particularly from the CAHSEE Office and Special Education Division, should also collaborate on additional studies designed to determine whether students with disabilities (in the aggregate and disaggregated by type of disability) have received the necessary instruction and services to ensure that CAHSEE is a valid measure of these students' achievement. Without sufficient services and opportunity to learn (OTL), the performance of students with disabilities on CAHSEE may not be a valid measure of their achievement, but rather a reflection of lack of instruction and access to the CAHSEE-based content standards.
- *Sponsor additional research.* CDE should, as part of its CAHSEE development and implementation contract(s), include studies designed to measure CAHSEE's appropriateness for students with disabilities. In addition, CDE should request proposals for additional studies designed to identify model programs that have had success in preparing students with disabilities for CAHSEE and other components of the state testing program. An important goal of these studies would be to determine under what

conditions the successful aspects of these models can be expected to generalize to other sites around the state.

- *Monitor research in other states and assessment programs.* States across the nation and major national assessment programs are conducting research related to students with disabilities and the validity of assessment results for a wide range of student populations. CDE should systematically collect and synthesize this information on an annual basis to inform current and future CAHSEE policy.

Technical and Feasibility Research. As indicated in the *Recommendations* section, several technical questions remain regarding the potential use of the various alternative assessment format options as *equivalent alternatives* to CAHSEE. In addition, because any alternative(s) would not replace CAHSEE, multiple systems would have to be developed, administered, scored, reported, and tracked. Developing the necessary infrastructure to develop, implement, report, and monitor new systems can be quite burdensome to teachers, administrators, and CDE staff.

In summary, determining whether a possible alternative assessment format is ready for implementation involves several research questions¹⁵:

- *Technical adequacy:* What technical studies for proposed alternative assessment formats have been carried out in other states and national testing programs? Are these studies of sufficient rigor to satisfy the requirements of a high-stakes assessment? Have these studies included student populations as diverse as those in California, especially students with disabilities? How can California-specific research build upon other studies conducted to determine readiness and appropriateness?
- *Feasibility:* How do the experiences of other states and national testing programs inform possible implementation in California? Can sufficient infrastructure be developed across the state to ensure equivalent delivery of alternatives across the state? What potential support and/or monitoring systems are already in place (e.g., county offices of education, state associations) and what additional ones need to be developed? What school- and district-based structures and systems support or hinder successful implementation of possible alternatives?

The proposed research should include carefully developed and monitored pilot studies with representative samples of sites (e.g., urban, suburban, and rural districts; large vs. small schools and districts). The sites should attempt to implement one or more alternative assessment approaches with various populations of students with disabilities. As with the proposed readiness research, CDE should consider three types of research

¹⁵ The following research questions related to technical adequacy and feasibility reflect the methodology employed by the WestEd study team to develop the recommendations related to alternative assessment formats. We believe this approach should guide ongoing research designed to answer when and if any of the models reviewed are ready to serve as an equivalent alternative to CAHSEE with significant incremental validity.

approaches to determine technical adequacy and feasibility: (1) conduct research in house; (2) sponsor additional research; and (3) monitor research in other states and assessment programs.

Implementing the Agenda: Role of Educators

The following steps must be taken by educators to implement any of the alternative assessment format, graduation requirements, or diploma options or recommendations, whether this occurs as part of a delay and phase-in approach (described in Section III) or under the current CAHSEE implementation timeframe.

*Secure full commitment to the goal that **all** students can meet the CAHSEE standards.* Throughout the research process, the WestEd SB 964 study team came upon groups and individuals recommending that California back off of its commitment that all students, including those with disabilities,¹⁶ be held to CAHSEE-level standards. Arguments ranged from the philosophical to the practical. The study team encourages ongoing debate and discussion as to how best to meet the needs of all students fairly and efficiently. However, we do not believe it is the best option at this time to implement *non-equivalent alternatives* to CAHSEE or move ahead with a tiered diploma system with the bottom rung denoting sub-CAHSEE performance. Before we even consider abandoning the goal, we need to fully implement conditions that support readiness universally across the state and evaluate their effectiveness.

Identify and make available appropriate instructional support materials. Members of the Advisory Panel were passionate in detailing shortages of tailored instructional materials for targeted students with disabilities. Our research indicates that the use of technology as a support tool is uneven and underutilized. Unless instructional strategies advance to the degree that the needs of greater numbers of students with disabilities are met, the goal of *equivalent alternatives* to either CAHSEE itself or the level of performance it represents (via graduation requirements) will not be met.

Increase professional development opportunities for teachers. Our research findings, supported by panel deliberations, indicate that a significant number of students with disabilities are being taught by teachers without the training and experience to meet their full needs. Both preservice and inservice opportunities need to be developed and made widely available for teachers and administrators. Training should focus both on instructional strategies for different types of disabilities and how to use CAHSEE and other assessment (formative and summative) information to tailor instruction and remediation. Expanded use of technology to offer these services should be explored.

Identify and disseminate information about model sites and programs. Our research has identified programs in California and nationally that appear to successfully meet the academic needs of large percentages of their students with disabilities. Such programs need to be evaluated more formally than is typically the case (as indicated by our review).

¹⁶ This discussion excludes the most significantly cognitively disabled who are more appropriately assessed by CAPA.

Such studies should progress from a “case-study” or observational approach to one that uses more scientifically-based control features. Conditions under which such programs can be reasonably expected to generalize beyond the development site should be formally explicated. Once the success of these sites and programs are verified under more stringent review criteria, information on their methods should be disseminated statewide.

Develop significant new support infrastructure. All of the recommendations will require the state and local schools and districts to develop new systems for implementation and monitoring. The more subjective the option (e.g., collections of evidence as an *equivalent alternative* to CAHSEE; equivalent courses for CAHSEE credit), the greater the need for local and state oversight and controls to ensure validity, equivalence, and fairness across the state. As indicated in the *Recommendations* section, the costs for the more subjective options will almost certainly exceed \$3 million per year at the state level, with additional local costs for full implementation. Unless the state is willing and able to commit the resources to build and maintain the necessary monitoring structures and systems, none of the options or recommendations will be implemented successfully. Without this commitment and effort, the revised policy will either become a side or back door that allows significant numbers of students to exit high school without strong skills, or it will fall on the backs of local educators to figure out how to implement and support such a system.

The WestEd study team began this effort understanding the complexity of the task and the importance of developing recommendations that were defensible and consistent with the needs of all populations of students with disabilities. Our experience has taught us that no magic solutions were awaiting our discovery. Rather, we would have to examine: the successes and challenges in implementing CAHSEE in California over the past six years since SB 2 was passed; important work done by HumRRO and other researchers describing the changing California landscape with respect to meeting CAHSEE expectations; promising practices and challenges in other states across the nation; the advice of legislators and their staff, educators, interest groups, and the general public obtained via public testimony, surveys, and interviews; and the knowledge and experience of the Advisory Panel. We are confident that the course of action described in this report balances the needs and rights of students with disabilities with the legitimate state need to ensure the integrity of the high school diploma.

**HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES
(SENATE BILL 964)**

VII. LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

[A draft of this section will be completed by March 20, 2005.]

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Appendix A: Members of the Advisory Panel

Tim Beatty, California Department of Rehabilitation

Stacy Begin, Oceanside Unified School District

Jerome “Ray” Cohen, San Francisco Unified School District

Judy Elliot, Long Beach Unified School District

Michael Gerber, University of California, Santa Barbara

Ellen Gervase, Pomona Unified School District

Angela Hawkins, Sweetwater Union High School District

Lynda Koraltan, Fremont Unified School District

JoAnn Murphy, Poway Unified School District/SELPA

Laura Peterson, California School for the Deaf

Tuccoa Polk, California Association of Family Empowerment Centers

Emma Sanchez-Glenny, Partners in Special Education, Inc.

David Smith, California State University Fresno

Diana Walsh-Reuss, Riverside County Office of Education

Liz Zastrow, Lodi Unified School District

Appendix B: Interview Questions for SB 964 Study

- What was the intent of the legislation?
- What would you recommend or like to see happen in relation to state law and regulations relevant to graduation requirements for California students with exceptional needs?
- What would you recommend or like to see happen in relation to graduation requirements for California students with exceptional needs?
- What would you recommend or like to see happen in relation to assessments aligned to the academic content standards for California students with exceptional needs?
- What would you recommend or like to see happen in relation to equivalent alternatives to the CAHSEE for California students with exceptional needs?
- Whom else do you recommend that we talk to?

Appendix C: Survey on Alternatives for Students with Disabilities

Appendix D: August 9, 2004 Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes
High School Exit Examination for Pupils with Disabilities Advisory Panel (SB 964)

Monday, August 9, 2004
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

East End Complex
1500 Capitol Avenue, Suite 72.149
Sacramento, CA 95814

ATTENDEES:

Panel Members

Stacy Begin
Jerome “Ray” Cohen
Judy Elliot
Michael Gerber
Ellen Gervase
Angela Hawkins
Lynda Koraltan
JoAnn Murphy
Laura Peterson
Tuccoa Polk
Emma Sanchez-Glenny
David Smith
Diana Walsh-Reuss
Liz Zastrow

Panel Member Absent

Tim Beatty

CDE

Bob Anderson
Michelle Goldberg
Alice Parker
Deb Sigman

WestEd

Stanley Rabinowitz
Mahna Schwager
Diane Youtsey

Call to Order:

Meeting brought to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM 1	Welcome and Introductions Review of the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act
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Bob Anderson, Manager, Policy and Program Support, Standards and Assessment Division introduced Deb Sigman, Director of the Standards and Assessment Division, who welcomed panel members and the public to the first of four advisory panel meetings to be held during the course of the study. Panel members were informed that each meeting will be audiotaped to provide a record of the meeting, and the tapes will be archived. Deb Sigman presented information about California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and its history, and referred panel members to resource materials for the CAHSEE and the California Assessment System. She described the SB 964 Study as a far-reaching study that will have impact for students; she then introduced WestEd staff that are conducting the study and Alice Parker, Director of the Special Education Division.

Alice Parker briefed the panel on the status of special education in California. She thanked panel members for serving and specifically for their thoughtfulness and caring about children. With high expectations, access to curriculum materials, and access to assessment, the number of students with disabilities who score at the 50th percentile in California state testing has doubled. Expectations for all students need to hold firm; schools and teachers need to focus on providing opportunities for learning the standards and working with standards-based materials.

Michele Goldberg, Deputy General Counsel, Legal and Audit Branch, shared information regarding the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act with panel members. When more than eight panel members meet and discuss concerns related to the issues of the panel, the public must be invited and noticed. Members should be aware that serial emails can create problems in that these communications are not subject to public review. Matters pertaining to the study should not be discussed in this manner. All records or anything the panel members receive as part of the meetings are public. A closed meeting is permitted only if legislation is pending. Michele Goldberg will be available to answer panel members' questions if panel members email them to Jessica Valdez, Education Programs Consultant, Standards and Assessment Division.

Bob Anderson introduced CDE staff involved in the project, and a public comment period was opened for agenda item 1. There were no comments.

ITEM 2	Review of the Meeting Agenda
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Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz, Program Director, Assessment and Standards Development Services, WestEd, thanked Bob Anderson and welcomed the

panel. Dr. Rabinowitz reviewed the agenda and gave panel members the opportunity to introduce themselves. Panel members shared their name, their professional background, what agency or organization they represented, and a personal or professional explanation of why they thought it was important for them to be part of the advisory panel meeting that day. A biography was read for panel member Tim Beatty who was not able to attend the meeting. A public comment period for agenda item 2 followed, and there were no comments.

ITEM 3	Conceptual Framework for the SB 964 CAHSEE Study
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Dr. Rabinowitz presented a PowerPoint presentation on the conceptual framework for the SB 964 Study. The presentation focused on the Study Context, Study Focus, Study Support Structure, Study Tasks, and Study Deliverables (see Attachment 1).

Panel members responded with the following comments and concerns:

- Could Dr. Rabinowitz talk with the business community? Employers could address such questions as, *What is the value of a high school diploma for these students?* and provide other types of input.
- It would be interesting to see a history of how long states having high school exit exams (HSEE) have had a HSEE in place.
- Several panel members expressed an interest in seeing dropout information for grade 9-12 special education students.
- One panel member expressed interest in differential passage rates, i.e., rates for first time test-takers passing a HSEE vs. graduation rates.
- One panel member commented that different factors influence dropout rates for special education students, i.e., reclassification.
- Several panel members agreed that dropout rates are essential information when looking at rates for students passing a HSEE or graduating high school.

The panel asked what other studies on HSEEs have been done. Bob Anderson cited the evaluation studies on the CAHSEE conducted by HumRRO. Dr. Rabinowitz noted that the SB 964 Study is part of the larger validity work for CAHSEE. The study contributes to two aspects of validity:

- 1) Is the CAHSEE a valid assessment of the achievement level (on the CAHSEE-specific standards) of the population of students with disabilities as a whole and different subsets of that population?
- 2) Can CAHSEE lead to meaningful improvement in the instruction of students with disabilities (prior to first administration) or remediation (following first administration) as well as overall reform of instruction for the population of students with disabilities as a whole and different subsets of that population?

A public comment period for agenda item 3 followed.

A representative of California Association of Resource Specialists (CARS) asked the question: What modifications are allowed on what parts of the test? Dr. Rabinowitz responded that some states take a more generous approach while others are more conservative. Any accommodation that will not affect the validity or content of the test is usually allowable. Perceptions in the field are changing in relation to reading standards and may be more generous. California can be characterized as generous but responsible. Additionally, Bob Anderson noted that typically states approach this issue by allowing any modification or accommodation that is in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The CARS representative also asked: How many teachers are teaching out of standards-based materials?

A representative of Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) commented that federal law requires liberal use of accommodations as included in IEP/504 plans.

ITEM 4	Review of High School Exit Exams, Alternative Graduation Requirements, and Diploma Options Across the Nation
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Dr. Mahna Schwager, Senior Research Associate, WestEd, presented a Power-Point presentation, Summary of Research, that summarized Research Tables 1-3, distributed as part of the meeting materials (see Attachment 2).

Ms. Diane Youtsey, Director of State Assessment, Independent Study for Placer County Office of Education, conducted a discussion of panel members on alternatives for students with disabilities. Dr. Schwager wrote panel members' responses on chart paper. Questions presented by WestEd on possible options for California are shown below:

- What are *Alternate Assessment Format* options for California's special education students taking the CAHSEE? What are the benefits of each option? What are the challenges of each option?
- What are *Alternate Assessment Requirements* for California special education students taking the CAHSEE? What are the benefits of each option? What are the challenges of each option?
- What are *Different Graduation Requirements* for California special education students taking the CAHSEE? What are the benefits of each option? What are the challenges of each option?
- What are different *Diploma Options* for special education students in California taking the CAHSEE? What are the benefits of each option? What are the challenges of each option?

Panel members' responses are shown below:

What are “Alternate Assessment Format” options for California’s special education students taking the CAHSEE?	What are the benefits of each option identified?	What are the challenges of each option identified?
Computer-administered test	Accessibility	Logistics, training, confidentiality, cost, computer availability, and scheduling
Curriculum-based measurement (CBM)	Directs teaching; if student fails, re-teach; measures what is taught	Validity and reliability
Take portions of CAHSEE throughout the year	Alleviates having to remember over a long period of time	Costly and time-consuming, question of who is responsible for administering
Use IEP goals and objectives as an assessment	*	Validity and reliability
Administer mathematics by computer in student’s first language	Offers accessibility	Logistics, training, confidentiality, cost, computer availability, and scheduling

* Advisory Panel members did not provide comment

What are “Alternate Assessment Requirements” options for California’s special education students taking the CAHSEE?	What are the benefits of each option identified?	What are the challenges of each option identified?
Administer shorter version of CAHSEE (same standards)	*	Magnifies errors; lessens reliability
Take multiple administrations of CAHSEE to look at growth overtime – shows evidence of growth	Helps discount prior learning opportunity; allows schools to be responsive to testing results	Cost, question of who is responsible for administering
Overage of English-language Arts and mathematics scores	*	Not testing true competency
Different passing scores	*	*
IEP team decision	*	Questions about consistency, treating all students the same, and protecting the integrity of the test

What are the “Different Graduation Requirements” options for California’s special education students taking the CAHSEE?	What are the benefits of each option identified?	What are the challenges of each option identified?
Substitute courses to work on ELA and mathematics skills	*	*
Counting remedial ELA and mathematics courses as core courses	*	*
Exceptional students education courses	*	*

* Advisory Panel members did not provide comment

What are the “Diploma Options” for California’s special education students taking the CAHSEE?	What are the benefits of each option identified?	What are the challenges of each option identified?
Level diploma system	*	*
Vocational diploma	Getting a job	Acceptance of vocational diploma

* Advisory Panel members did not provide comment

During the discussion, panel members raised issues related to the following areas that were designated as issues to be revisited at a later date:

- Are there differential passage rates for high school exit exams?
- How long have different HSEEs been in place?
- What does a diploma mean?

ITEM 5	Future Meeting Dates and Work Plan for the Study
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Future meeting dates were discussed. October 25th was proposed as the next advisory panel meeting and February 1st was proposed as the third panel meeting. Panel members responded that the October date conflicted with CDE’s high school conference but tentatively scheduled the Feb. 1st date. The second meeting will be rescheduled. The panel’s chart paper responses will be expanded by WestEd and shared with the panel for review at the next panel meeting.

ITEM 6	Public Comment Period	INFORMATION
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A representative from LDA volunteered to serve as a resource for the panel. The representative suggested that applicants for the panel who were not selected be notified. She commented that the numbers presented in the introductory remarks for special education students in California did not include students with 504 plans because California does not track 504 plan students. She commented that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) does not require high-stakes examinations for graduation, but, as noted in the PowerPoint slides, six states with high school exit examinations make graduation contingent on passing the examination, including California. She told the panel that the PowerPoint slides were excellent and requested copies to share with her clients.

A representative from CARS commented that she was an elementary school teacher and represented students with disabilities in California. She noted that the key point to acknowledge was the importance of being successful in life and

a contributing member of society; therefore, California needs to develop options for students with disabilities. She commented that alternative assessment format ideas are important because, in order to graduate, students need to show what they know.

Adjournment of Day's Session

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Appendix E: October 12, 2004 Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes
High School Exit Examination for Pupils with Disabilities Advisory Panel (SB 964)

Tuesday, October 12, 2004
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza
300 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

ATTENDEES:

Panel Members

Tim Beatty
Stacy Begin
Jerome “Ray” Cohen
Judy Elliott
Michael Gerber
Ellen Gervase
Angela Hawkins
Lynda Koraltan
JoAnn Murphy
Laura Peterson
Tuccoa Polk
Emma Sanchez Glenny
David Smith
Diana Walsh-Reuss
Liz Zastrow

CDE Presenter

Jan Chladek

WestEd Presenters

Stanley Rabinowitz
Mahna Schwager

Guest Presenter

Rachel Quenemoen, National Center on Educational Outcomes

Call to Order:

Meeting brought to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM 1	Welcome and Introductions Purpose of the SB 964 Study
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Ms. Jan Chladek, Manager, California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Office, Standards and Assessment Division, California Department of Education (CDE) welcomed the panel and called the meeting to order. Members of the Advisory Panel, WestEd, and CDE introduced themselves.

ITEM 2	Meeting Agenda and Goals Future Meeting Dates and Locations
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Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz, Program Director, Assessment and Standards Development Services, WestEd, welcomed everyone back for the second Advisory Panel meeting. He reminded the panel that they were a formal CDE advisory panel and that the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act was still in place. Panel members could, therefore, not discuss outside of the meeting anything related to the agenda. Dr. Rabinowitz pointed out that the topics were for public discussion at the panel meetings and the agenda included ways to collect this input in the meetings.

Dr. Rabinowitz stated that this was the second Advisory Panel meeting. In order to benefit from the panel members' knowledge and expertise, WestEd arranged several sessions to provide an opportunity for interaction and the collection of ideas during the meeting as well as for future meetings. Dr. Rabinowitz said that the Advisory Panel would break into small groups twice according to the agenda. He noted that WestEd would facilitate the sessions to ensure that the panel input was collected and the small groups would report back to the large group. Dr. Rabinowitz indicated that there would be an opportunity for public comment after each agenda item and from 3:30 p.m. until the end of the meeting.

Dr. Rabinowitz then stated that feedback provided by the panel from the first meeting indicated a need to know more about the CAHSEE. Therefore, he said, CDE would provide more information about the CAHSEE and the independent evaluations that had been conducted on the CAHSEE.

Since the last meeting, WestEd had taken the group notes from the first panel meeting with expanded details and references, according to Dr. Rabinowitz. He stated that during the first small group session, the panel would be looking at the expanded notes and letting WestEd know if their comments were captured, if the chart expansions made sense, and if there were additional comments that should be added. Then he stated that after lunch, the meeting would focus on alternative assessment options – what else aside from CAHSEE could be used to measure the same or equivalent standards. He mentioned three activities related to

reviewing alternative assessments and said he would present more information about how to judge alternative assessment options. Dr. Rabinowitz indicated that Ms. Rachel Quenemoen, National Center on Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota, would discuss with panel members what other states were doing, especially states with similar systems as California, and Dr. Mahna Schwager, Senior Research Associate, WestEd, would describe ongoing research activities being conducted as part of the SB 964 Study Project in California. Then the group would break into smaller groups for the rest of the day to discuss the functional aspect of the project, identify feasible options, and assess difficulties involved in implementing them. Dr. Rabinowitz said there would be an opportunity to debate the legitimacy and practicality of options for implementation and that the goal was to build a practical framework that utilized panel members' experiences as a lens from which to view these options.

Dr. Rabinowitz informed the panel that they would break for public comment at 3:30 p.m. but that the panel might run a little longer so that WestEd and CDE could fully clarify panel members' comments.

Mr. Kent Hinton, San Joaquin County Office of Education, informed the panel about the meeting logistics and announced the remaining three advisory meeting dates and locations.

January 7, 2005. Location: Health Services Building, Sacramento

February 1, 2005. Location: Health Services Building, Sacramento

March 24, 2005. Location: Doubletree Hotel, Sacramento

Dr. Rabinowitz then informed the panel that the format for the remaining meetings would be similar to the structure of the current meeting.

ITEM 3	Overview of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)
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Ms. Chladek referred panel members to the package of materials from the first panel meeting that included resources for the CAHSEE. Other resources were sent to the panel for this meeting, including a copy of the test blueprint and sections of the independent evaluator's report. According to Ms. Chladek, the independent evaluations have been conducted since 2000 and all of the evaluation reports were located on the CDE website. In response to an earlier question from the panel regarding California dropout rates, she explained that, in California, there are no student identification numbers for individual students at present, making it difficult to track individual students. She also noted that dropout rates statewide had decreased since the CAHSEE started.

Ms. Chladek then explained the purpose of the CAHSEE and gave background on the test. (See Attachment 1)

Dr. Rabinowitz informed the panel that it was important to distinguish between test accommodations and test modifications. He explained that accommodations do not change the construct of what is being tested whereas modifications do.

An accommodation, according to Dr. Rabinowitz, for example, would include taking additional time, meaning that the student would be taking exactly the same test and be tested on the same standard and therefore should lead to the same diploma. Since the CAHSEE is not a timed test, for instance, this increase in time would not change the construct being measured because time is not part of the test. This would be the same for a large-print or Braille version of the test because it would not change what the test is measuring. On the contrary, modifications fundamentally change what the test is measuring, according to Dr. Rabinowitz. For example, in mathematics, the use of a calculator is a variation that seems reasonable but changes the construct that is measured. Use of a calculator is a modification because it would change the part of the test that tests students' capacity or ability to compute, he stated.

Ms. Quenemoen added that assessment regulations differ in many states, especially for reading, and that research centers and testing companies were working together to explore these issues with reading and testing experts.

Mr. Kent Hinton opened public comment on this agenda item. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Mr. Craig Nelson, California Teacher's Association

Ms. Sylvia DeRuvo, California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education Teachers

Ms. Jo Behm, Learning Disabilities Association

ITEM 4	Review and Discussion of Notes from August 9 Advisory Panel Meeting
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Dr. Rabinowitz announced that the panel would break into two groups for more focused discussion. One group focused on options pertaining to alternative assessment format, while the other group focused on options pertaining to alternative assessment requirements. During the small group discussion, panel members reviewed the expanded group notes from the first Advisory Panel meeting and responded to the following questions:

- Overall, are the notes an accurate representation of your experiences and ideas?
- Is anything missing?
- What should be added?

The breakout groups reconvened and reported on their discussion to the larger group.

Descriptions of options appear shaded below, and panel members' comments, in bulleted layout, follow each option:

Advisory Panel Member Comments from Breakout Session #1

I. "Alternative Assessment Format"

Options for California's students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE

a. Computer-administered test – A student uses a computer to take a set of traditionally constructed items requiring student responses, typically with a correct and incorrect-forced choice answer format.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore an online version of the CAHSEE without adaptive measures • the opportunity for students to learn/performance may be impacted because of the availability issues such as not having access to computers, this topic should be explored further • increased flexibility • adaptive testing could lead to student's manipulating the system • logistical and technical issues need to be addressed • option is not practical for the 2005/2006 school year
b. Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) – Assessment is tied directly to the curriculum. This method uses direct observation and recording of a student's performance in a local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions. Typically used for basic skills development at the elementary and junior high school levels, not graduation stakes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to explore formative and summative assessments with the directive of reteaching and retesting • need to cover all standards in order to be as comprehensive as CAHSEE • would this be documented on all records (IEP)? • benefit is to link testing to time of instruction and focus retesting • challenges include: tracking those who pass and don't pass, organizing the classroom, data collection, and tracking • how much and what kind of re-teaching is enough when a student continues to fail the test? • does this option change the summative nature of CAHSEE?
c. Take portions of CAHSEE throughout the year – Students complete a test over several days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who determines when students will be tested? state, school, student's family? • helpful for all students • management could be a problem • may not help target population, specifically students with disabilities

- requires multiple perspectives about what an exit exam measures
- labor-intensive
- time-consuming

d. Use IEP goals and objectives as an assessment – Assessment process uses student work as evidence to demonstrate achievement of standards-based Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals.

- documentation is difficult
- could vary by disability type
- standards-based materials are difficult for teachers to obtain
- not all IEP's will provide high level education
- can be too subjective and may require a significant amount of training
- could be subjected to outside influences on the IEP process

e. Mathematics administered by computer in student's first language – Text is presented in student's first language instead of English.

- could be difficult to translate into all languages
- could be considered a best practice
- sign language translation can be a reasonable accommodation
- second language learners could be given an oral assessments

f. Alternative assessments to a high school exit exam — Students may take different assessments to earn a standard high school diploma.

g. Checklists – This option consists of lists of skills reviewed by persons familiar with a student who observe or recall whether students are able to perform skills, and to what level.

h. Portfolios (Body of Evidence) – This option consists of a collection of student work gathered to demonstrate student performance on specific skills and knowledge, generally linked to state content standards.

- how widespread? Majority of students that receive special education services are learning-disabled students
- data collection
- training
- logistics
- good to have multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge
- subjectivity issue requires an external monitor
- setting the cut-score can be difficult
- standardizing expectations across the state can be difficult

i. Teacher review committees – A panel of teachers recommends graduation depending on a review of a student's academic record and work.

- having teacher sign-off on the portfolios is positive
- teachers are considered to be experts and to know the standards
- increase opportunities for teachers for staff development

II. “Alternative Assessment Requirements”

Options for California’s students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE

a. Shorter version of CAHSEE (same standards) – A test with fewer questions that test the same content.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a viable option • Who would administer exam? • Fewer questions, fewer opportunities for students to pass. May result in a higher failure rate, fewer incorrect responses may result in failure • CAHSEE is not long; reasonable amount of time • Will a shorter test really increase participation? If so, how?
b. Take multiple administrations of CAHSEE to look at growth over time – shows evidence of growth – Students take multiple tests over time with a focus on growth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently have multiple administrations • Would the whole test or chunks be taken multiple times? • Who would administer the chunking of test? • More discussion about the chunking option is needed. • Multiple <i>assessments</i> do not allow reporting of growth over time • Would this be considered a modification? If so, how will it impact the role of CAHSEE in NCLB as part of annual measurable objectives?
c. Different passing scores – Performance level or criteria (e.g., cut scores) needed to pass is adjusted lower.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not preferred • Concerned about lowering cut scores • Will it result in an increase in special education referrals? Parents may be interested in having a different passing score for their child. • Who will be responsible for establishing the cut score? • IEP decisions may not be consistent within and between schools
d. IEP decision – Options is defined as a collection of student work demonstrating student achievement on standards-based IEP goals and objectives, measured against pre-determined scoring criteria.

- Not preferred
- Concern whether IEPs are legally defensible if they are in conflict with NCLB
- IEP teams may be vulnerable to outside pressure. IEP teams can focus on accommodations and modifications
- Lowering scores not preferred
- Potential litigation for the IEP team over graduation requirements if they have final decision.
- Concern with consistency between IEP teams
- IEP goals and objectives may not reflect state standards
- Should IEP team be responsible for determining curriculum?
- How is curriculum accessed?

e. Out-of-level testing (OLT) – A student who is in one grade is assessed using a level of test that was developed for students in another grade level. Typically used as an alternate assessment for Title 1 systems accountability, not graduation stakes.

- Not preferred
- Not sure if legal
- May not be equivalent to CAHSEE

General Comments from Panel Members

- Some of the requirements are not “equivalent” to the CAHSEE
- Concern about students who may never be able to pass the CAHSEE even with accommodations
- Concern that some parts of NCLB and IDEA may be in conflict
- Concern about calculators because students can do higher order skills but not multiplication tables. Would like more real life application.
- Would like to reconsider the calculator as an accommodation issue
- Simplify the reading load on an assessment whenever possible
- Would like diagnostic information about students

Dr. Rabinowitz asked members of the panel to respond to the presentations with additional ideas or comments. A panel member brought up issues around IEP teams having final decisions. In response, a panel member brought up the issue that it was potentially inappropriate to put decisions in the hands of inexperienced teachers. A panel member commented that it was important to clarify the population being discussed and said that if students were unable to show what they know based on current assessment standards, this may imply that these students may be able to meet state standards through test accommodations and/or modifications. Consequently, the panel would not need to focus on developing a more complex system (i.e., portfolios) for them, according to the panel member. Questions about other students, who might not be able to meet

the standards, were brought up and the fact that another type of diploma with occupational skills might be needed was mentioned.

Dr. Rabinowitz responded that the issue of different diplomas is discussed across the nation. Ms. Quenemoen informed the panel that this deep policy topic has many varying opinions and that it was important to discuss whether there would be considerations for different diploma tracks or diplomas earned with different standards.

Mr. Hinton opened the meeting for public comment on the item. The following individual addressed the panel:

Ms. Sylvia DeRuvo, California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education Teachers

ITEM 5	General Issues Related to Alternative Assessments
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Dr. Rabinowitz reminded the panel that in the morning they had worked through the panel's thoughts on alternative assessment formats and requirements based on the panel's experiences. Dr. Rabinowitz stated that the goal of the afternoon was to provide information that may help to inform the next round of opinions on this topic. This was a stage of the process that the panel should go through to decide on the viability of alternative assessment formats and requirements. Although this would be a difficult task because of the interconnectedness of everything, Dr. Rabinowitz warned, it was important to trust the effectiveness of the process. Over the four advisory panel meetings, members would have the opportunity to discuss various topics. Currently, the panel would focus on the same list but from a different angle while utilizing information about what other states are doing, he said.

Dr. Rabinowitz then presented four criteria for judging the viability of alternatives (see Attachment 2). A panel member asked if any options implied collateral policies or if some options might appear more usable when considered in relation to policies that supported them. Dr. Rabinowitz agreed and distinguished between thinking about these concerns in a technical versus the more common way. That is, would an option provide sufficient technical strength to warrant its action versus does the value of this action outweigh the burden. For example, does the worth of using portfolios outweigh the burden of the additional training required to use them effectively, he asked, or would it be better to reallocate the training effort towards training on the CAHSEE? He pointed out that one option might appear feasible for accountability, but another might not have the same degree of technical adequacy but might have greater face validity. It was important to consider how the choice would play out under the law or in public opinion, he urged.

It was pointed out that while the CAHSEE has a reliability of .90, there is not a meaningful portfolio system with a .90 reliability, and that there is always a trade-off between reliability and validity so that a community may accept a slightly lower reliability if public opinion demands the greater validity of a portfolio system. How much lower reliability is acceptable, he asked. If the reliability drops to .84 then maybe this would not suffice to make the system worthwhile for the purposes of accountability. For validity purposes, alignment studies could be conducted in which teacher experts could review to ensure that the test was measuring the same standards and at the same level, he mentioned. However, doing this credibly might be difficult, especially considering the questions of cut scores or identifying the level of “good enough.” Furthermore, he pointed out, costs vary greatly among options and can be considered in relation to potential lawsuits.

Mr. Hinton opened up the session for public comment but no one addressed the panel.

ITEM 6	National Trend and Issues Related to Alternative Assessments
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Ms. Quenemoen presented information based on a recent study by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) (see Attachment 3). She informed the panel that the presentation was a picture of what other states are doing, and she cautioned that the criteria that states use when making policy decisions might not be apparent. Her intention was to paint a picture of alternative routes that some states use to help students get to a diploma. Following comparisons among all states with high school exit examinations, Ms. Quenemoen discussed Alaska, Minnesota, New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey in depth. In terms of alternative assessments, only a few states have figured out how to give a completely different test, she said, and documenting what California is doing with the SB 964 study would be illuminating to other states.

When asked what states would like to do but cannot, Ms. Quenemoen responded that in a number of states people believed that some children are not able to show what they know on paper-and-pencil tests. In these states, people sought to show what these children know and can perform, she said, and pointed out that two states are lobbying for similar but lower standards for these students.

A panel member asked whether states that have identified an opportunity-to-learn (OTL) issue have changed their process (e.g., postponed assessments, lowering standards) until the OTL issue is addressed, or have continued assessing and therefore seeing an impact on graduation rates. Ms. Quenemoen responded that New York is an example of a state that recognizes lower standards to access a diploma because the students have not had sufficient opportunity to learn. For those who have worked in special education, this type of

conversation about whether and how all students have access to a challenging curriculum is new.

Mr. Hinton opened up the session for public comment. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Ms. Jo Behm, Learning Disabilities Association

Ms. Sylvia DeRuvo, California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education Teachers

ITEM 7	State Trends and Issues Related to Alternative Assessments; Panel Discussion and Feedback on Alternative Assessments
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Dr. Schwager distributed a copy of a two-page survey being administered to the leadership of special education interest groups in the state such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the state Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) directors. She mentioned a plan to send it out to the California Teacher's Association (CTA), to the attention of special education teachers. Dr. Schwager asked for recommendations for other special education interest groups to survey. Panel members suggested the California Advisory Commission on Special Education. Also offered was a suggestion to provide the survey to research offices that will need to manage this project. Another suggestion was to include students.

Panel members then moved back into two separate groups for discussion. Each group was asked to respond to the following questions in relation to the information presented at the meeting and distributed prior to the meeting as preparation materials.

- In reading through the Alternative Assessment options (format or requirements) did you notice elements that interested, puzzled, or surprised you?
- What are the most important aspects of alternative assessments (format or requirements)?

The breakout groups reconvened and reported on their discussion to the larger group.

Descriptions of options appear shaded below, and panel members' comments, in bulleted layout, follow each option:

Advisory Panel Member Comments from Breakout Session #2

I. "Alternative Assessment Format"

Options for California's students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE

a. Computer-administered test – A student uses a computer to take a set of traditionally constructed items requiring student responses, typically with a correct and incorrect-forced choice answer format.	
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased access for students • a (minor) positive
Technical Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a standardized presentation • equally valid; for some students, more valid • security concerns, impacts validity
Administrative Burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • burden is large at first but potentially could lessen • start-up and maintenance difficulties • appropriate facilities needed • training is needed • security concerns, impacts validity
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large start-up costs but could provide long run savings • savings could be a result of less paper • need to determine cost, particularly state costs vs. local costs

b. Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) – Assessment is tied directly to the curriculum. This method uses direct observation and recording of a student's performance in a local curriculum as a basis for gathering information to make instructional decisions. Typically used for basic skills development at the elementary and junior high school levels, not graduation stakes.	
c. Take portions of CAHSEE throughout the year – Students complete a test over several days.	
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased accessibility across different disabilities
Technical Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be more valid if CBM is implemented correctly • are standards accessible, being taught, being assessed?
Administrative Burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mastery model decreases burden • non-mastery model can increase burden only if implemented as remedial model • high schools may need to change, which may result in an increase in a short-term burden • resources needed
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resources needed • paying for remediation • finding enough teachers to teach the courses

d. Use IEP goals and objectives as an assessment – Assessment process uses student work as evidence to demonstrate achievement of standards-based Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals.	
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if writing and teaching with standards-based instruction
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questionable validity

Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> questionable subjectivity
Administrative Burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> documentation depends on how much monitoring is needed
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dependent on the size of the monitoring system

e. Mathematics administered by computer in student's first language – Text is presented in student's first language instead of English.

No Notes

f. Alternative assessments to a high school exit exam — Students may take different assessments to earn a standard high school diploma.

g. Checklists – This option consists of lists of skills reviewed by persons familiar with a student who observe or recall whether students are able to perform skills, and to what level.

h. Portfolios (Body of Evidence) – This option consists of a collection of student work gathered to demonstrate student performance on specific skills and knowledge, generally linked to state content standards.

Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accessibility depends on the degree of structure and standardization: is it rigorous, specific, how drawn out?
Technical Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> needs a real structure (e.g., rubric) could be more valid, especially with addition of other criteria (e.g., attendance and homework) concern about subjectivity succeeding on checklists may be more attainable for students checklists are used primarily in elementary school for small amounts of information; for high school, they can be used for counting purposes with multiple components
Administrative Burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time scoring training electronic vs. paper version IEP could determine if a student meets the criteria
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> very high especially for training and monitoring

i. Teacher review committees – A panel of teachers recommends graduation depending on a review of a student's academic record and work.

Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential increase in accessibility
Technical Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> validity issues since review committees can be subjective
Administrative Burden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting time protocols training
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> material development

II. “Alternative Assessment Requirements”

Options for California’s students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE

General Comments from Panel Members:

- historically, used differential standards for proficiency in IEPs
- CAHSEE is suitable for students that meet the standards
- important to have high standards on the test
- schools are offering CAHSEE remedial classes as well as an 11th grade CAHSEE class
- would like to eliminate the CAHSEE

Concerns:

- concern about providing alternatives for students who are at the 4th or 5th grade level, will need to lower standards for them, which is not fixing the problem
- concern with lowering cut scores
- concern with the IEP team making decisions (issue of consistency)
- concern that some students with auditory problems may not pass the CAHSEE
- can provide accommodations and modifications only to a certain extent
- difficulty in grappling with what to do with the population, especially students who cannot pass the CAHSEE even with accommodations and modifications

To consider:

- consider making portions of the test easier to read, possibly reconsider this as an accommodation
- interested in the Massachusetts plan
- consider having two levels, pass with or without accommodations and modifications
- for 10th and 11th grade, consider leaving the test the same as it currently is
- for 12th grade, consider an alternative or the same standards test at a lower level
- if a student does not pass on the first try, consider an alternative
- “chunking” test is still an alternative but has administrative and cost burdens such as an increased cost of the students don’t pass, need to provide this opportunity for all students
- use the CAHSEE to inform teaching and provide information about the student but not as a means to obtain a diploma
- use a weighted option system (e.g., college entrance with a balance of total points) with test score, GPA, attendance, all counting with different weights

A member from each small group presented the notes from the group discussion to the rest of the panel. Dr. Rabinowitz asked members of the panel to respond to the discussion presented with additional ideas or comments.

ITEM 8	Public Comment Period
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Mr. Hinton opened up the meeting for public comment period. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Dr. Mary Falvey, Professor of Special Education at California State University at Los Angeles

Mr. Dale Mentink, Protection & Advocacy, Inc.

Mr. Mal Grossinger, Principal, California School for the Deaf, Career and Technical Education

Ms. Jo Behm, Learning Disabilities Association

Ms. Diana Herron, State Special Schools

Dr. Rabinowitz invited the panel to offer additional input for clarification and advice.

A panel member commented that CDE indicated an interest in the panel's input by adding a meeting for the panel in January and asked who would be involved with the report development. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that WestEd would develop the report with extensive input from the panel, the state, Ms. Quenemoen, NCEO, and from the current research as part of the project. He asserted that the panel would play a critical role in this process and WestEd hoped that their voices were heard whether on an agreed-upon or disagreed-upon option. If the report was inconsistent with the panel, he said, WestEd needed to address this, as it is important to have the panel's full support.

Ms. Chladek informed the panel of the specific state agencies that would be receiving a copy of the study report and which agencies would be responsible for approval of implementation.

The panel was informed that they would receive an evaluation form to respond to by the end of the week.

A panel member was concerned that the report would not recommend options that would leave a significant number of children out of receiving a diploma. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that WestEd viewed this as the greatest challenge. The question is how to break up the CAHSEE standards and yet still assess them, he said. In addition, he stated that if the group was not assessing the CAHSEE standards, then it needed to identify what should be done. The initial responsibility, he said, was to provide an alternative equivalent to CAHSEE and to exhaust that list.

A panel member asked about the availability of the NCEO report. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that there would be time in future meetings to revisit the data and prior issues. Ms. Quenemoen informed the panel that she anticipated the NCEO

report would be in its final form in about six weeks and she said that at least portions of the final report would be shared with the panel when available.

A panel member asked for more information regarding dropout rates at different grade levels, dropout rates before and after graduation standards implemented, passage rates at different times with different categories of disabilities existed. Ms. Quenemoen responded that some states have data, although there are issues regarding the data. Dr. Rabinowitz commented that the final SB 964 study report needs to be based on reasonable arguments and reasonable data.

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Appendix F: January 7, 2005 Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes
High School Exit Examination for Pupils with Disabilities Advisory Panel (SB 964)

Friday, January 7, 2005
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

East End Complex
1500 Capitol Avenue, Suite 72.149
Sacramento, CA 95814

ATTENDEES:

Panel Members

Tim Beatty
Stacy Begin
Jerome “Ray” Cohen
Michael Gerber
Ellen Gervase
Angela Hawkins
Lynda Koraltan
JoAnn Murphy
Laura Peterson
David Smith
Diana Walsh-Reuss
Liz Zastrow

WestEd Presenters

Stanley Rabinowitz
Diane Youtsey

Call to Order:

Meeting brought to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM 1	Welcome Meeting Agenda and Goals Future Meeting Dates, Locations, and Logistics for Providing Feedback
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Kent Hinton, San Joaquin County of Education (SJCOE), welcomed panel members and provided information on the meeting logistics. He provided information about the public comment times, specifically noting that the comments may be no more than three minutes long and must be related to the agenda topic.

Stanley Rabinowitz, Principal Investigator, WestEd, welcomed panel members. Dr. Rabinowitz introduced his project staff, noting that Eric Crane has replaced Mahna Schwager as the Project Director.

Jan Chladek, California Department of Education, introduced the CDE staff, noting that Lily Roberts has replaced her as manager of the CAHSEE Office.

Mr. Hinton introduced the SJCOE staff.

Dr. Rabinowitz reminded the attendees that the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act applies to this meeting. He explained that the panel would continue the practice of introducing a topic at one meeting and revisiting it in further detail at the next meeting. In the previous panel meeting, the alternative assessment requirements were discussed and the current meeting would discuss graduation requirements and diploma options. The current meeting would also include a presentation on strategies for helping students with disabilities meet high standards.

ITEM 2	Review and Discussion of Notes from October 12 Advisory Panel Meeting
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Dr. Rabinowitz asked the panel members whether they had comments about the October 12, 2004 advisory panel meeting minutes. No comments were provided, which was taken as a formal acceptance of the minutes.

ITEM 3	Presentation and Discussion of Alternative Assessment Options from Three States
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Dr. Rabinowitz presented “High Stakes Testing Policies for Students with Disabilities: Three State Profiles” (See Attachment 1). Before beginning his presentation, he informed the panel members of some important caveats.

- Even though another state may be using an alternative system, it does not mean that it is a good idea in California.
- Even though another state may not be doing something, it does not mean that it is good that California is also not doing it.
- There is no evidence that the alternative systems in the three states are working or could work in California.

Dr. Rabinowitz focused the discussion on three states, Alaska (AK), Massachusetts (MA) and Oregon (OR). He showed that even the largest of these states, Massachusetts, is one-seventh the size of California. He presented a rationale for examining these states. Dr. Rabinowitz emphasized that lessons can be learned from the states but that their systems are in the early stages and that specific evidence that students with disabilities will pass at higher rates or have higher skill sets is not available.

Dr. Rabinowitz opened up the discussion for panel members to ask questions on why these three states were selected.

Dr. Gerber asked how the three states differ from others that require exit examinations for graduation. Dr. Rabinowitz replied that these three states have alternative systems.

Dr. Walsh-Reuss asked for information on passing rates on these three states.

Dr. Rabinowitz discussed that the portfolio, used in Alaska, is an interesting idea that has technical/logistical issues attached to it. At this point, Alaska is moving ahead to see what will happen with their system, but evidence that it works is not available and there is reasonable evidence that this idea is well suited to Alaska's small population.

Dr. Gerber asked whether the diploma track is universal across all ninth graders. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that all the students have the same requirements. The initial test is a ninth grade test and students have already taken the test and now will see whether they are diploma ready.

Ms. Peterson asked how the diploma track could work for English learner students from outside of the U.S., including students with and without disabilities. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that the only alternative in Alaska is to quickly get such students on the diploma-ready track.

Mr. Cohen commented that the focused retest, used in Massachusetts, has the advantage of clearly measuring one thing. Dr. Rabinowitz pointed out that the focused retest has items at roughly the same difficulty level, not content.

Dr. Gerber commented that the focused retest has to trade some degree of technical refinement to measure mastery, yet the purpose is to report mastery. Dr. Rabinowitz discussed that in testing, the model is not to master everything to move on to next grade, rather to master "enough" to move on. Therefore, the passing score of a summative test is set based on whether students have learned enough to be successful at the next grade. Since graduation implies that students have enough knowledge to be successful at the next stage, it is desirable to know the depth of their mastery; hence CAHSEE wants to look at depth.

Mr. Beatty asked whether students know what areas they did not pass in order to study for the next test. Dr. Rabinowitz responded yes, that strand level information is given. In Massachusetts, every item is released as well, but it is a very expensive system.

Dr. Gerber asked whether the GPA requirement used in Massachusetts appeals is based on state or local averages. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that the requirement is based on the GPAs of all students across the state who scored a minimal passing score on the MCAS.

Dr. Walsh-Reuss asked whether the GPA is calculated on all classes. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that he will double-check on this, but he thinks it is on the common core, assuming classes are those linked to state standards at grade appropriate standards.

Ms. Peterson asked whether marking all students leniently would correct itself on the GPA requirement. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that if all students were marked leniently, this would be similar to adding a constant to all students' grades, which does not change anything.

Ms. Gervase asked whether the focused retest and the appeal process were available to general education students. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that they are available to all students, regardless of disability status. Massachusetts is building a standard diploma and there is a lot of pressure to get all the students to pass. Not all students are passing yet, but it will be interesting to see whether this leads to better learning.

Mr. Cohen asked whether the certificate of initial mastery (CIM) in Oregon is similar to O and A levels in the English school system. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that it is not and that all students are initially on the same track.

Dr. Gerber asked what differentiates the outcome. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that passing the CIM at a higher level is equivalent to an honors diploma like the Golden State Seal. A certificate of attendance does not require a minimum level of academic performance.

Ms. Gervase asked whether the certificates of achievement were tied to credits. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that it includes credits.

Ms. Peterson asked whether students could earn a standard diploma without passing the CIM. Dr. Rabinowitz responded yes and that the honors diploma is for passing the CIM.

Looking at the states through the three lenses, Dr. Rabinowitz asked the panel whether they found any particular case interesting, fascinating, transferable, and feasible.

Mr. Cohen asked about the significance of a high school diploma. Dr. Rabinowitz discussed that in Oregon, honors diploma implies high performance on CIM. Standard diploma implies that the student took the CIM and did not pass it. The other two types of diploma imply lower level achievement on CIM and the lowest

level is based purely on attendance. Dr. Rabinowitz pointed out that alternative requirements mean that meeting them implies that a student has achieved the same standards implied by passing the equivalent exit exam.

Ms. Peterson stated that the Oregon diploma system does retain integrity with the public. It does provide more intellectual integrity to the public on what the different papers mean.

Dr. Rabinowitz pointed out that Oregon could use this system because the OSAS is not a graduation requirement, which opens up many other possibilities. The whole theory behind graduation testing is that we can come up with a set of minimum performance expectations and believe that if we give someone a diploma who has not met that, the odds are very strong that that person will be at a real disadvantage at the next level, whether at school or work. This is the same in Oregon; they believe that they cannot set that type of standard. California, Alaska, and Massachusetts said that they can set that standard, thus can give a standard diploma, whether they will be successful or not.

Ms. Peterson stated that when you have students leave high school without diploma, they are at a disadvantage in the employment sector because the lack of paper and the lack of skills only compound their disadvantage.

Dr. Gerber stated that he is intrigued with the GPA usage in Massachusetts. He disagrees with statewide GPA due to differential scaling at local districts, but the general notion that you first determine locally what kind of GPA correlates with minimal passage seems sensible. He also stated that if you have a focused retesting to make pure mark of pass or fail, this could be an automatic option for students who tried before, attended school, and that local efforts had been made. If this happens automatically, the system may be more affordable.

Ms. Gervase expressed support for the focused retest, in terms of cost effectiveness. Regarding the performance appeal, she stated that it would not be expensive to validate student attendance and GPA.

Ms. Begin discussed that her students are currently taking the test and waiting for their scores and that some of these students are at school everyday but may not be good test takers. She believes that it is important to look at the big picture.

Dr. Hawkins stated that she has seen similar situations to what Ms. Begin described and that the students are becoming discouraged after the first failure on the CAHSEE. As a result, these students started to question their reason for attending school everyday and may fall into hopelessness. Members of the public feel that it is up to the school district to “cure” the problem, and if students do not pass the CAHSEE, the district did not do its job. She discussed the possibility of the system having morale and motivation issues in addition to public awareness and information issues.

Ms. Murphy stated that she is impressed by the performance appeal. She liked the fact that it focuses on a number of criteria rather than just one. She would like to see some remedial steps to make sure that students have that opportunity. She is concerned with how to ensure accessibility to the standards-based classes.

Ms. Koraltan supported the performance appeal. She believes that students are working very hard and when they exit high school with a certificate of attendance, they cannot do anything with it. This certificate can be viewed as insulting since the students worked very hard. She stated that there is a need for a level system so that a student's diploma can reveal what they really did and accomplished in high school. The diploma system cannot be black and white; there is a need to address the grey areas.

Mr. Cohen stated that the panel is looking at such a narrow range of ability, purely academic. He likes the idea of performance appeal, but cannot get past the fact that in his opinion, a diploma is useless unless students have something else to have with it. He stated that a diploma could not get students a job in itself. Dr. Rabinowitz responded that the test is designed to make the diploma meaningful. He liked the idea of Massachusetts's multiple measures and differential measurements. He is concerned with the public perception of this system and does not feel that there is a purpose to Oregon's certificate of attendance diploma.

Ms. Peterson responded to Mr. Cohen's comments about diplomas. Ms. Peterson stated that in many situations, a diploma is a default. For example, in the deaf community, UPS is a major employer and to them, a diploma is everything. Having a diploma is a pre-requisite to apply for any position at UPS. Lack of diploma is a default rejection disregarding your ability and capability. This is often the case and that a diploma can mean everything.

Dr. Smith shared that he has a lot of mixed thoughts and feelings about the morning session. He thinks that the CAHSEE should be retained because it maintains high standards for students. However, at the same time, there are many students struggling with this test, so an alternative is needed but exactly what is needed is not clear to him. He liked the portfolio idea, but is concerned about the additional work for teachers.

Mr. Beatty stated that he liked Massachusetts's multiple options, but it needed to be a computerized system, independent of people involvement, where data are created. He also liked the appeal process but is concerned with the GPA as a statewide average for general students and disabled students because it can be difficult to address the fairness factor.

Ms. Zastrow liked the performance appeal in Massachusetts. She indicated that it was important to have different possible diplomas and liked the idea of considering career and vocational aspects. She is concerned about students being burdened with too many English and Math courses and not having the opportunity to take vocational classes.

Dr. Walsh-Reuss stated that she is intrigued with Massachusetts because the state took a complex issue and made it understandable. She noted that it was important to make the process clear to students, parents, administrators, and the public. She agreed with Mr. Beatty on the re-test piece that it allows feedback on specific areas that students have not been successful in mastering because it allows educators to focus on specific areas. In terms of the GPA, she expressed concern that this system could increase pressure for teachers to change students' grades based on pressures from parents. She is also concerned with the curriculum. She stated that curriculum in special education has made great strides in the past few years on aligning with state standards. She also raised the concern of school scheduling and how to balance how many hours students should spend in different courses.

Dr. Rabinowitz noted that on February 1, 2005, a draft of recommendations on this topic will be presented to the panel. He thanked the panel for their comments and feelings behind each comment. He will use both substantive and emotional arguments shared today and try to shape what is a reasonable set of procedures. He noted that there is a need for a diploma, but without a meaningful diploma, there are also many disadvantages. He reiterated the need to build an alternative assessment system that has integrity to be credible to the public, but take into account differences in the population.

Mr. Hinton opened public comment on this agenda item. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Diana Herron, California School for the Deaf
 Jo Behm, State and Federal Public Policy Consultant
 David Eberwein, California School for the Deaf
 Sylvia DeRuvo, California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education Teachers

Mr. Hinton announced the next meetings.
 February 1, 2005. Location: Health Services Building, Sacramento
 March 24, 2005. Location: Doubletree Hotel, Sacramento

The panel was dismissed for lunch.

ITEM 4	Presentation and Discussion on Accessing High Standards for Students with Disabilities
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Dr. Rabinowitz introduced Ms. Diane Youtsey. He asked her to present about how students with disabilities can access high standards because of her firsthand experiences with the challenges involved with the topic (See Attachment 2). In addition, this panel's work is a part of the final report so that the minutes and presentations are a part of the history to justify the recommendations.

Dr. Rabinowitz asked the panel for comments and questions on Ms. Youtsey's presentation.

Mr. Cohen was surprised to see that ELA had higher passing rates because it is the opposite at his district. Dr. Rabinowitz pointed out that the statistics are based on scores throughout the state.

Ms. Peterson discussed that students have to first read the questions before solving the math problem. The format of the question may limit student's ability to solve math problems if reading is difficult for a student.

Ms. Gervase asked whether the NCEO report includes challenges for students with disabilities in addition to the sixteen benefits listed. Ms. Youtsey will provide the list for the next panel meeting.

Mr. Hinton opened public comment on this agenda item. The following individual addressed the panel:

Jo Behm, State and Federal Public Policy Consultant

ITEM 5	Discussion of Different Graduation Requirements for Students with Disabilities
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Dr. Rabinowitz introduced the breakout session and asked panel members to go to their pre-assigned groups to discuss two separate but overlapping topics, graduation requirements and diploma options. He asked the panel to keep these two topics as separate as possible. The breakout session will first start discussion with different graduation requirements for students with disabilities. The requirements are the same right now for the standard diploma. There can be statements that decide that different graduation requirements should have the same diploma or that different graduation requirements should be reflected in a different diploma.

Mr. Crane explained the four lenses for the two breakout sessions.

- 1) Does the option address accessibility concerns for students with disabilities?
- 2) Does the option promote validity and reliability?
- 3) Is there a manageable burden on teachers/administrators/parents?

4) What is the cost of implementing the option?

Advisory Panel Member Comments from Breakout Session #1**III. “Different Graduation Requirements”****Options for California’s students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE**

a) Counting remedial ELA and general mathematics courses as core courses required for graduation
Does the option address accessibility concerns for students with disabilities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on who decides which students have access and how it is done • An example of reading intervention program for English language learners that may be used across four years of high school • Recommend a combination for special and general education where one year of reading intervention may count for the fourth year • Standardization problem in terms of working with different populations and how to decide types of course replacements • Suggested equivalent graduation standards but integrate it with a corrective reading program • Access to reading is not addressed by standards, rather to address standards at a lower level • What is the tradeoff between nonstandard and standard classes? • The scheduling of courses and programs may restrict student access because there are only a fixed number of hours/courses • Need to have course options in order to increase accessibility (e.g., business math and consumer math) • Could be a lack of consistency in accessing resources
Does the option entail a manageable burden on teachers, administrators, and parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burden on teachers to accommodate the course to different population. • Recommend a team effort between general and special education teachers to team-teach and reduce teacher burdens. The problem with this recommendation is that there are not enough team teachers and higher cost issues. • Burden of school and administrators to add specialists for this option. • Administrative burden of setting up the system initially, monitoring the system, and dealing with logistics. • Recommended having only one general math course to reduce burden. • Could be a burden in that the entire focus would strictly be on remedial courses
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See team-teaching in burden section.
Does the option promote validity? Reliability?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems with NCLB accountability—may show a lower four-year graduation rate. • Not certain if remedial courses can be considered or qualified as valid and/or reliable

b) Exceptional students education courses

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

- Students need to have highly qualified teachers
- Need to consider giving students with disability precedence and to not deny them access to general education courses.
- Students with disability have the right to access the general curriculum.
- Balance the appropriateness of these courses so that students with disability do not need to sacrifice other importance courses they have to (or should) take.
- Here lies the difference between NCLA and IDEA; federal versus local.
- For different individuals, these courses increase accessibility to curriculum
- All students should have access to these courses. Curriculum counsels that set criteria for acceptable coursework would need to accept these courses outside of the general curriculum

Does the option entail a manageable **burden** on teachers, administrators, and parents?

- Burden on the student and his/her family to determine whether they want to take advantage of the extra course option.
- If students can access job-training courses, the burden is perceived as something positive.
- There may be burden from peers who may pressure a student to leave a course.
- Small schools and districts may not have the option to provide additional courses
- Teachers need to have “buy-in” to offering other courses, single subject focus may be considered restrictive

Does the option entail a manageable **cost**?

- Increase in cost through the time it takes to implement
- Academic curriculum counsels are in place in most districts so that would be less of a cost to implement
- Cost of textbooks

Does the option promote **validity**? **Reliability**?

- Concern with the consistency of the coursework between schools, districts, statewide

c) Waiver or appeals

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

- This option should be removed for high-stakes tests.
- This may deny students postsecondary education and employment opportunities.
- Increases access as another method to obtain a diploma
- Accessible through an IEP decision
- Concern over the use of the term “waiver”, may imply a back door notion

Does the option entail a manageable **burden** on teachers, administrators, and parents?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are other ramifications as a result of this option. • Added burden on communicating this to the public. • Time spent to document different types of substitutions. • This option should not prevent the students from experiencing general education courses. • Considered to be less of a burden because the information would be on the transcripts
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal costs because multiple testing transcripts are already implemented. • Cost for public relations to inform public of what this option signifies • Cost of training staff to implement process • Cost of implementing multiple administrations where a high number of students in the test may take the test multiple times prior to access to a waiver • Cost of implementing the appeals process
Does the option promote validity ? Reliability ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One validity concern relates to the credibility of the process if waivers or appeals are allowed.

d) Fewer credits

Does the option address accessibility concerns for students with disabilities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group opposed this option because it is demeaning for students. • Suggested to have a second chance option instead of fewer credits.
Does the option entail a manageable burden on teachers, administrators, and parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public perception could be negative, thinking that expectations are lowered
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May decrease costs because there are less courses.
Does the option promote validity ? Reliability ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group felt that this option would not be valid.

e) IEP specification of requirements

Does the option address accessibility concerns for students with disabilities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of access depends on how the requirements are addressed. • Could increase because the IEP team is aware of expectations and can provide proper support
Does the option entail a manageable burden on teachers, administrators, and parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burden of teachers and IEP with pressure to reduce graduation requirements—pressure from parents. • Many students would request this process thereby increasing the time of all of those involved in the decision
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased involvement of teachers, administrators and therefore an increase in the cost to fund the additional time
Does the option promote validity ? Reliability ?

- Not technical concerns, rather subjective concerns with this option.
- If you decrease requirements, you will also decrease reliability.
- Concern about the consistency across schools, districts, statewide

f) Alternative courses

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

- The group felt that this option is a subset of option A (counting remedial ELA and general mathematics courses as core courses required for graduation).
- All students should have access to this option
- Students can access practical application content

Does the option entail a manageable **burden** on teachers, administrators, and parents?

- Increase in planning/monitoring time for the teacher
- Teachers responsible for modifying the curriculum can increase time

Does the option entail a manageable **cost**?

- Special equipment/material costs
- Accessing community resources could be costly.

Does the option promote **validity? Reliability?**

- No comments.

The breakout groups reconvened as a larger group and reported out on their discussions.

Mr. Hinton opened public comment on this agenda item. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Jo Behm, State and Federal Public Policy Consultant
 Diana Herron, California School for the Deaf
 Mal Grossinger, California School for the Deaf
 Sylvia DeRuvo, California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education Teachers

ITEM 6	Discussion of Diploma Options for Students with Disabilities
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Dr. Rabinowitz stated that over the last five years or so, the country moved into the single diploma option, in part, driven by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). He asked the panel to go back to the basics and discuss possible diploma options for students with disabilities. He reminded the panel of the difference between one standard diploma received through different paths as opposed to different diplomas received through different paths.

Advisory Panel Member Comments from Breakout Session #2

IV. “Diploma Options”

Options for California’s students with disabilities taking the CAHSEE

a) Level diploma system

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

- The level of access depends on the state interest that may be to differentiate students in this population.
- This may affect the value and meaning of a diploma, thus we should leave the diploma system—and the word “diploma”—alone.
- Discussed that the Golden State Exam is an example that deals with access issues for this option.
- A diploma should be granted if students could perform on and pass the CAHSEE.
- To reduce accessibility issues, we should remove the punitive effects of high stakes testing.
- Need to address standards and exceptions to address access issues.
- Need to communicate the different levels of diploma to employers.
- Tiered process would be nice to include a career diploma
- Consider this option for all students (English Language Learners, ELL)
- Florida has 4-5 diploma options for all students-statewide system with all options recognized for employment purposes (honors, basic, vocational/career)

Does the option entail a manageable **burden** on teachers, administrators, and parents?

- Identifying and defining different levels and cutoffs.
- Burden of more students dropping out.
- Issues dealing with political ties that may create barriers.
- Psychological burden of passing/failing the system.
- Need to address public perception of multiple diplomas
- Would the military accept all of the diplomas?
- Placement issues for students
- Concern with tracking/labeling students to a single option
- Concern that IEP students will automatically be placed in a lower level track
- Difficult for administrator to manage all of the options

Does the option entail a manageable **cost**?

- Human capital costs.
- Marketing costs spent to inform the public/business community about the diplomas.

Does the option promote **validity**? **Reliability**?

- Need to better communicate the option with the public.
- This system must support growth.
- Challenge is to redefine and fine-tuning the system.
- Although there are different levels of diploma, do all diplomas imply high school completion?
- What is the meaning and connotation of having a diploma?
- The word, diploma, has a lot of value
- Need to either add or subtract the value of a diploma.
- Local areas may vary in their expectations
- Statewide diploma system would be more consistent (consistent cut points)

b) Vocational diploma

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

- Need technical endorsement and expertise to increase access.
- Given that there are not as many vocational programs today, is this option practical?
- This option needs to be clarified so that it does not imply that a vocational diploma = tracking.
- Students need to be able to access the courses
- Increases access to the work world, prepares students with work-related skills
- Could limit options for students to just vocational courses
- Without access, concern that students will not access hands-on trade skills

Does the option entail a manageable **burden** on teachers, administrators, and parents?

- Burden of schools to have to change layout and structure of classrooms/facilities, for example, converting a chemistry lab to a shop class.
- Need qualified teachers
- If a student changes tracks, burden increases for administrators, teachers
- Concern that students with disabilities would be put in the vocational track
- Qualified students without a diploma who are not working could be an issue

Does the option entail a manageable **cost**?

- Dismantling program costs.
- Additional investment/costs
- Funding for the courses
- If vocational courses are not often, there could be an increase in society costs because of the lack of a vocationally trained workforce
- Having vocational standards may increase costs.

Does the option promote **validity? Reliability?**

- Option should be referred to as technical rather than vocational diploma.
- Prefer technical certification above diploma option.
- Need for statewide vocational standards to address consistency.

c) Certificate options

Does the option address **accessibility** concerns for students with disabilities?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental objections may decrease the level of student access. • For students in inclusion programs, parents may want certification of progress. • This option takes away the “normality” of students with disability and parents may not want the certification option. • Passing the CAHSEE may be a change of student status. • Discussion on CAHSEE versus California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) • Access depends on how scoring will incorporate this option for postsecondary education entry. • Concern about the acceptance of certificates by employers and post-secondary schools (technical schools) • Option for students with severe disabilities • Allows for the recognition of all students-addresses the gray area
Does the option entail a manageable burden on teachers, administrators, and parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to send out more information to serve business interests. • Not taken seriously, not viable • In some districts, it already addresses students with severe disabilities • How do students feel when they receive a certificate? Possibly not as distinguished • Concern that students that were receiving a diploma would now earn a certificate
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of paper
Does the option promote validity ? Reliability ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the power of the word “diploma” such as using honor courses. • May be valid and reliable for students who perform at lower levels. • Need to elucidate on the meanings and efforts behind a diploma that it is merit-based and earned.

d) Special education diploma

Does the option address accessibility concerns for students with disabilities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group disagrees with this option because of its negative implication. • It is questionable whether there will be any demand for a special education diploma. • Students concerned with the negative connotation of a special education diploma • Concern with stigma issues • Concern with confidentiality regarding students • A diploma sounds better than a certificate, consider just calling it a “diploma” with more detailed language in the narrative to indicate an IEP decision
Does the option entail a manageable burden on teachers, administrators, and parents?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma • Employers may view negatively which could burden those that implement the diploma and the students.
Does the option entail a manageable cost ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comments
Does the option promote validity ? Reliability ?

- Invalid due to the negative stigma and demeaning nature of this option.
- Consistency with the IEP determinations

The breakout groups reconvened as a larger group and reported out on their discussions.

Mr. Hinton opened up the session for public comment. The following individuals addressed the panel:

Jo Behm, State and Federal Public Policy Consultant
Judy Yamamoto

ITEM 7	PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD Public comment is invited on any matter <u>not</u> included on the printed agenda.
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Mr. Hinton opened up the session for public comment but no one addressed the panel.

Adjournment of Meeting

Appendix G: February 1, 2005 Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes

Appendix H: March 24, 2005 Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes

Appendix I: Provisions of State and Federal Law and Regulation that Are Relevant to Graduation Requirements and Assessments for Pupils with Exceptional Needs

Appendix J: Summary of Steps Needed to Bring California into Full Compliance with State and Federal Law

Appendix K: Alternative Assessment Systems in Alaska, Massachusetts, and Oregon

Alaska Alternative Assessment Options

Name of High School Exit Exam Assessments:

- Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE)
- Waiver from High School Graduation Qualifying Examination
- Optional Assessment (OA)

Eligibility/ Process:

Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE)

For diploma track students offered initially in the spring of their sophomore year
Waiver from HSGQE

- Is requested for several reasons, including recent arrival in the state, rare and unusual circumstances, or passing another state's competency exam
- If denied, a student or student's parent or legal guardian may appeal the denial by filing a form provided by the governing body, and prescribed by the department
- The request must state the grounds for appeal, including a brief summary of the nature of the original waiver request, and a statement explaining why the governing body was wrong to deny the waiver
- The appeal is reviewed by a panel of three members appointed by the commissioner
- The panel may deliberate in person, through correspondence, by telephone, audio or video teleconference, or by other electronic means, and will submit a recommended decision to the commissioner after it has deliberated on the record

Optional Assessment

- Students must have attempted to pass all sectors of the HSGQE with or without accommodations before being eligible
- Optional assessments must be recommended by an IEP or Section 504 team
- Approval in writing by the Department of Education and Early Development must be received prior to administration of the Optional Assessment
- A copy of the IEP or Section 504 plan must be included in the application
- The student may only take the optional assessment for the content areas for which the student received a "below" or "not proficient" score

Diploma and Certificate Options:

- Non-Diploma Track (Certificate of Achievement)
- Diploma Track (Standard Diploma)

Litigation Issues:

- On March 16, 2004, children with disabilities and their parents filed a statewide class action lawsuit challenging Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE).

Alaska Alternative Assessment Options, continued

- The lawsuit charges that the test violates both federal and state law, because it discriminates against students with disabilities in multiple ways and, as implemented, causes students with disabilities to fail, no matter how smart and hardworking they might be. The students filed the lawsuit only after repeated requests to negotiate a solution with the State of Alaska were unsuccessful.

Massachusetts Alternative Assessment Options

Name of High School Exit Exam Assessments:

- Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
- MCAS Performance Appeal

Eligibility/ Process:

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

- The statewide assessment program used to measure student performance at all stages in their academic careers (3rd- 12th) across all subjects

MCAS Performance Appeal:

- A parent, guardian, or educator may request an appeal on behalf of a student, but only the superintendent of schools or designee, or the director of an approved private special education school or collaborative may actually file an appeal with the State
- The local superintendent may initiate an appeal on his or her own for an eligible student with a disability with the consent of the parent (or student who is 18 or older)
- An appeal may be filed any time after the student has taken the MCAS grade 10 test in the appealed area at least three times
- The Department of Education reviews the appeal documentation to ensure it meets the requirements, and then refers the appeal to the MCAS Performance Appeals Board
- For eligibility, a student has had to attend school 95% of the time both last school year and this school year (unless waived by the Commissioner of Education) and must demonstrate through their grade-point average or collected work that their knowledge and skills in the subject area of the appeal meet the competency determination standard (equivalent to the 220 Needs Improvement level on the grade 10 MCAS test)

Diploma Options:

- Standard Diploma

Litigation Issues:

- Eight high school seniors have filed suit in state court seeking an injunction to prevent the state from withholding the diplomas of students who failed the exam.
- The students allege that the graduation requirement based on the test: (1) is illegal because it was created through regulations, not through the state's Education Reform Act of 1993; and (2) narrows the curriculum by requiring students to pass just two subjects, English and math, rather than the other subjects targeted for improvement in the law.

Oregon Alternative Assessment Options

Name of High School Exit Exam Assessments:

- Oregon State Assessment System (OSAS)
- Juried Assessment

Eligibility/ Process:

Oregon State Assessment System (OSAS)

Designed to assess a student's skills and knowledge of the content standards established by the State Board of Education

Only parents can exempt students from taking the OSAS

Juried Assessment

- Is an assessment option for high school students with disabilities (and other students) in which students are allowed to demonstrate knowledge and skills related to a particular academic benchmark in a different manner
- Available for all students
- Can be used to satisfy the requirements for multiple diploma options

Diploma and Certificate Options:

Multiple Diploma Options

- Honors Diploma
- Regular/Standard Diploma
- Certificate of Attendance
- Certificate of Achievement

Litigation Issues:

- A lawsuit against the state of Oregon by Advocates for Special Kids was settled in 2001. The suit alleged that Oregon's test for the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM, a benchmark assessment) discriminated against students with learning disabilities